

Missouri Conservation Forums Autumn 2004

A Summary of Citizen Input



Public Profile 2-2004
Policy Coordination Unit
Missouri Department of Conservation
Jefferson City, Missouri

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Executive Summary

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) sponsored a series of eight Conservation forums in the fall of 2004. Their purpose was to seek citizen input regarding Department programs and activities. This report summarizes the content of the eight fall forums, which had a total public attendance in excess of 335, not including MDC staff.

The Department is committed to its mission:

- To protect and manage the fish, forest and wildlife resources of the state.
- To serve the public and facilitate its participation in resource management activities.
- To provide opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy and learn about fish, forest and wildlife resources.

The Department's commitment to listening to constituents about conservation continues. When John Hoskins became director of the Department on July 1, 2002, he immediately placed strong emphasis on listening to the public to set conservation goals and work priorities.

Director Hoskins personally attended all eight fall forums in 2004. Every division administrator and other top staff attended one or more forums. Many questions and issues were addressed on site, and summaries are contained within this report. Others were discussed informally or one-to-one during breaks.

The Department of Conservation has eight administrative regions, illustrated on the map on the next page. Each region has a Regional Coordination Team of supervisors for major department programs. These teams planned and organized the forums to meet regional needs, making each forum format slightly different. In each case, the general public was invited via news releases and other publicity, and letters of invitation were sent to those who attended previous forums.

Besides opening the meetings to any question participants wished to ask, one question was posed at all forums:

- *What kinds of public use facilities are most important to provide and maintain on conservation areas?*

This report is organized into two major sections. The Common Threads section covers topics that surfaced in several regions or have statewide application. These topics include, in no particular order of importance, Public Use; Horses; Deer, Turkey, Quail and Waterfowl Management; Fisheries; Regulations; Outreach and Education; Forests; General Department Operations; and Commission Level Issues. The second major section is entitled Region Specific Input and focuses on topics that were regional in scope, or did not fit within one of the topical headings.

Missouri Department of Conservation Regions



Central Regional Office
1907 Hillcrest Dr.
Columbia, MO 65201
573-882-8388

Kansas City Regional Office
3424 N.W. Duncan Road
Blue Springs, MO 64015
Phone: 816-655-6250

Northeast Regional Office
2500 S. Halliburton
Kirksville MO 63501
660-785-2420

Northwest Regional Office
701. N.E. College Dr.
St. Joseph, MO 64507
816-271-3100

Ozark Regional Office
P.O. Box 138
551 Joe Jones Blvd.
West Plains, MO 65775
417-256-7161

St. Louis Regional Office
2360 Highway D
St. Charles, MO 63304
636-441-4554

Southeast Regional Office
2302 County Park Dr.
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701
573-290-5730

Southwest Regional Office
2630 N. Mayfair
Springfield, MO 65803
417-895-6880

Director Hoskins' Message

Director Hoskins presented brief remarks to welcome forum participants in each region and explained the Department's general direction, priorities and financial situation. Following is a synopsis of the Director's opening remarks:

Thank you for coming. The Department of Conservation's effort to engage the public and gain its input is a sincere one. We have a big job to do, but it would be an impossible job if we did not view Missouri citizens as partners in solving our conservation challenges.

The Department's mission is to protect and manage the fish, forest, and wildlife resources of the state, to serve the public and facilitate their participation in resource management, and to provide opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy and learn about fish, forest, and wildlife resources.

I believe Missourians support this mission, and that conservation of natural resources is fundamental to the health of our communities.

In the past two years, Conservation Department leaders have participated in a number of public meetings as part of a larger effort to obtain public ideas and input.

Deer management is one example of a conservation challenge that can only be addressed with public support and understanding. In some parts of our state, deer management efforts have been so successful that control of the deer herd and reducing its size is now a primary goal. We must balance this concern with other public sentiments that value and appreciate plentiful deer, including the views of deer hunters and businesses that benefit from outdoor recreation. Deer hunting is an \$800 million economic boon to Missouri and a valuable family tradition. To maintain a healthy and sustainable deer herd, we need to shift the harvest from bucks to does and increase the number of does taken.

In the last year, the Department held thirty public meetings about deer management to obtain ideas and comments from interested citizens. These meetings, and results from other surveys, contributed to changes in the deer hunting seasons, such as:

- Fifteen (15) extra days of archery hunting.
- Expanded length and geographic area of the urban part of the firearms deer season.
- Establishment a pilot program in 29 counties of Northern and Central Missouri to test the effectiveness of antler point restrictions in increasing the doe harvest.
- Increased funding for Share the Harvest processing programs to encourage hunters to take additional deer and donate them to others in need.
- And, as an added convenience to landowners, allowed all deer taken on landowner permits to be checked by telephone without visiting a check station

Much emphasis has also been placed on adoption of new management plans for specific species and resources. Forestry, quail, catfish and trout are all receiving renewed attention and long-term management strategies. This direction illustrates our renewed focus on fundamental services and values that the Conservation Department has long represented.

Continuation: Director Hoskins' Message

As we look at ways of enhancing particular species, we also remain committed to a broader philosophy. Our agency is focused on landscape changes and efforts to make meaningful improvements to watersheds and ecosystems. We must ensure that public land management addresses the full range of wildlife diversity, game, and non-game conservation needs.

Tonight we are anxious to hear what you have on your mind and welcome your suggestions about how we can better serve you.

Common Threads: Issues at several forums

The following section records citizen input on 11 topics. When a comment is placed in one of these sections, it is no longer included in the Region Specific Input section. The intent of this section is to collect issues of broad interest which are likely to be resolved on a statewide basis. The order of presentation does not reflect any priority of the importance of what was said.

Comments recorded are not direct quotes, rather an abbreviated summary of what we heard. Some written comments handed in at the forums are also provided, mostly in the original form but in some cases edited for brevity. Comments recorded as "What MDC Said" are also edited from the original, for brevity and to avoid redundancy.

There are many references to Conservation Areas, abbreviated as "CA" in most cases. The region originating each comment is noted in parentheses at the end of the comment, with the following abbreviations:

CE = Central Region
KC = Kansas City Region
NE = Northeast Region
NW = Northwest Region

OZ = Ozark Region
SE = Southeast Region
SW = Southwest Region
SL = St. Louis Region

Public Use of Conservation Areas

What kinds of public use facilities are most important to provide and maintain on conservation areas?

This question was posed statewide during planning for the 2004 forums. Its intent is not to replace open input, rather to get input on a special topic about which the Department is particularly interested. Except for horse use, which is reported in another section, most of the responses to this question are incorporated in this section.

In the years since *Design for Conservation*, MDC acquired new lands and developed a variety of amenities on different areas. Land owned now comprises almost 800,000 acres, about 1.7% of the land in Missouri. MDC manages over 1000 different areas in all parts of the state. Public use amenities range from parking lots and boat ramps to horse trails, bird-watching blinds, disabled accessible fishing piers, privies and nature centers.

In planning to manage any department area, a multi-disciplinary team is assembled to resolve management needs and appropriate public uses. Appropriate use varies with geography, soils, terrain, vegetative cover, public wants, etc. What may be appropriate on one area is not necessarily appropriate on another. Local staff do a good job planning for local conditions, but sometimes varying decisions reached in different places tend to confuse the public. The Department continually balances between setting consistent rules that apply statewide, and flexibility for area managers to adjust to meet local management needs and public desires.

A standing Public Use Committee is now working to address unanswered questions, mediate conflicts and strike statewide balance on a growing list of requests for public uses. Input obtained from these forums will help it to provide better public service on Department managed areas.

What MDC Heard . . . Public Use of Conservation Areas

General Thrust of Public Use Facilities

- Keep areas minimally developed. (SL)
- Empower people with access amenities: parking lots, trash receptacles, outdoor toilets. (CE)
- First, provide Conservation Areas with the protection (fences, gates, enforcement) required for the purpose for which the area was purchased or accepted in the first place, (e.g., habitat management). (SE)
- Keep providing green space and areas for wildlife, especially considering today's development and associated fragmentation. Keep more areas undeveloped, forested and natural for wildlife. (SL)
- Protect green areas, greenways and riverways, for wildlife. The Busch Area is becoming isolated, surrounded by development and more important than ever to protect from encroachment. (SL)
- User of two areas appreciates good parking and restrooms. MDC should not get frustrated by vandalism, should provide parking/restrooms in more places. (CE)
- Provide more programs/facilities geared to the female population. (CE)
- Provide more handicap access and programs geared to the disabled population. (CE)
- Present facilities are fine. (OZ, written)
- Restrooms, shooting ranges, camp sites. (OZ, written)
- Compliments for saving pockets of green in the metropolitan area! Keeping areas wild with little development is important. (SL)

Land Acquisition

- The Department should buy more land in Jefferson County, and provide a facility similar to the Busch Area office. It needs to include public fishing lakes and trail development, walking and riding both. (SL)
- Would like to see MDC build more lakes and ponds on Conservation Areas.
- Need more public hunting ground. (OZ, written)
- Need more public river accesses and keep the roads open. (OZ, written)
- Less is more: concentrate on land acquisition and not structural/facility improvements. (SW, written)

Develop these Specialized Facilities

- Horse trails and the Mort Walker paved trail and viewing tower are popular in Newton & McDonald counties. (SW)
- More areas should provide winter trout fishing. (CE)
- On areas like Busch CA, users need a message board to tell when big events may conflict with their activities, e.g., when special hunts or field trials are in progress. (SL)
- A Busch CA visitor wants more facilities for AKC approved field trials, and suggests opening Weldon Spring CA for dog training or trialing. (SL)
- Full-use areas, maintaining food plots, etc. (SW, written)
- Provide a variety of areas with things like viewing blinds for waterfowl, trails. (SW, written)
- Shooting ranges. (SW, written)
- Paved trails get used, docking areas get used. MDC education help is well-developed (at areas like Bois D'Arc CA). (SW, written)
- Low impact areas, i.e., restricted to foot traffic only (SW, written)

Continuation: What MDC Heard...Public Use of Conservation Areas

- Hiking trails are very important, increase the number of trails to make conservation land more accessible to the general public. (SW, written)
- Nature centers, campgrounds, forests, footpaths. (SW, written)
- Walking and hiking trails. (SW, written)
- Small game hunting areas (rabbit, quail); put elk on display at Prairie State Park. (SW, written)
- More public access for fishing (fee-free and offer only limited facilities such as restrooms); more handicap access and dock type structures; more shooting ranges, manned or unmanned. (SW, written)
- Camping areas and fishing areas, hiking trails, latrines (bathrooms). (SW, written)
- Handicap access to fishing and hunting areas. (SW, written)
- Provide restrooms. (OZ, written)
- More fishing and camping areas would be nice. (OZ, written)
- Hiking trails on MDC areas, not just parks. NW MO has too few parks. (NW, written)
- Provide restrooms. (NW, written)
- Trash, restrooms, shooting range at Bilby Ranch. (NW, written)
- More public boat accesses on the Missouri River. (NW, written)
- Walking trails with tree identification. (NW, written)
- Parking-camping-boat docks. (NW, written)
- Parking and restrooms/showers. (NW, written)
- Bathrooms, roads, ramps and signs. (NW, written)
- Bathrooms, lighting. (NW, written)
- Boat ramps, well maintained and with safe, adequate parking. (NW, written)
- Trash cans (NW, written)
- Provide garbage disposal containers. (NW, written)
- Provide facilities for those who don't have private place to hunt or otherwise recreate. (NW, written)
- More archery ranges – can't shoot in his backyard. (CE)
- Provide hunting and fishing for family use on department areas. (OZ, written)
- Provide quality fishing on more department areas. (NW, written)

Maintenance Issues

- Fed up with trash: people need to take care of their own stuff. (SL)
- What happened to the "Adopt-A-Lake Program?" What about Stream Team bags? There are very few trash receptacles at the lakes. (SL)
- Trashing areas is a big problem. MDC should do something, and learn that providing facilities to control trash is good public relations. (SL)
- Used to like Whetstone Creek CA, but now unhappy that the trails are not mowed enough for hiking. (CE)

Roads and Non-Equestrian Trails

- Provide better access to remote areas to help handicapped. (OZ, written)
- Open more roads on Conservation lands, especially ones that were previously open but have now been closed to public vehicle traffic. Without access roads people are not able to enjoy conservation lands as much as they should be able to. (OZ, written)

Continuation: What MDC Heard...Public Use of Conservation Areas

- Other states have built ATV trails as a way to attract more people in to enjoy the outdoors and fish and wildlife. In Missouri, it appears that most agencies just want to keep ATVs off of public lands. Horses are accommodated, and go all over, but not ATVs. (OZ)
- Shannon County is one of most beautiful in the country, and lots visit to enjoy the scenery. Unfortunately, many spots of the roads where there were once beautiful scenic overlooks are getting blocked by trees and undergrowth. MDC would do well to work with others to open up those vistas. (OZ)
- The fragile “Ozark landscape” is used to justify limitations on ATV use, but is the Department as careful when it comes to timber harvest and skidder damage? (OZ)

What MDC Said. . . Public Use of Conservation Areas

- Public use issues are a constant conundrum. At one forum, attendees ask for more vehicle access, especially for ATVs to accommodate older and disabled hunters. At another, the request is to “keep it wild” and some hunters complain of hunts disrupted by ATVs. Horse users want more trails, but other users tell us they go elsewhere because of too many horses.
- The Department has a variety of areas: some are restricted from vehicle access and some have special accommodations for the disabled. Some want primitive areas to hunt without the noise and disruption of motorized vehicles, while others don’t like having to walk-in. It is not possible to accommodate all uses on every area. We try to provide a balance of areas within each region to provide diverse opportunities. Even where “walk-in” is the rule, Special Use Permits or Hunting Method Exemptions can provide options to help those who cannot walk.
- Disabled people who are unable to hike or visit areas on foot can get a Special Use Permit to use an ATV. Special Use Permits can also, on occasion, be used to allow access to cemeteries and family sites. The Department tries to be a good neighbor and to make areas accessible for reasonable use by adjoining landowners. Sometimes those conflict: the trail one neighbor wants may create problems or lead unwanted trespassers to another neighbor.
- Trails are expensive and we cannot responsibly open them unless staff/dollars/partners are adequate to maintain them properly. Land is fragile in some areas, and setting a good example is important on all areas. Building trails – whether for ATV, horse or hiker – without creating erosion is tough, and requires frequent checking and repair.
- Ponds and lake development are normally, but not always, beneficial to fish and wildlife. It is increasingly difficult to find sites for larger lakes, but many more small lakes can be built.
- There are many gaps in shooting range opportunities. Ranges are important places to prepare for safe firearm use, yet safety issues and concerns from neighbors make it very difficult to find suitable range locations.

Horse Use, Dog Use and Field Trials

Horse use of Department areas was a topic in all regions, and historically equestrians have consistently participated in forums and public meetings. Public land and access to it is important to the group of Missourians who own and ride horses for recreation.

A related use of some areas is for “field trials” of hunting dogs, typically with judges on horseback. Department areas become more important to participants in these traditions as private holdings become more subdivided and developed. As important as these areas are to field trial participants, other area users sometimes complain that trials are disruptive.

The Department has about 300 miles of designated equestrian trails, and another 1000 miles of gravel roads open to riding. Regulations allow horses only on roads in most areas, and on designated horse trails in other areas. In some cases federal rules limit flexibility. However, horse use is in many cases an allowable “compatible use,” if not in conflict with management objectives and public interests.

User support is especially important on horse trails, because responsible riders are often the front line defense against erosion, stream impacts and user conflicts. The line between a “popular” and “overused” site is important but not always easy for an area manager to discern, indeed it can be seen much differently by the many groups using Department areas.

Department areas with designated horse trails also need to fit within a larger context. Other agencies provide horse trails, too. The Department works with Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Mark Twain National Forest and others to provide information about trails [see <http://www.mostateparks.com/equestrian/equestrian.htm>]. When federal funds are used to acquire and develop projects, including trails, some limitations on horse use can be involved.

What MDC Heard . . . Horse Use, Dog Use and Field Trials

Horse Trails

- The different uses of conservation areas should benefit all. Horse trails are deer runs when not used by horses. Turkeys like trails, and camping can be done outside the hunting season. Conservation lands should always be for hunting at different times of the year. (SW, written)
- Provide opportunities for equestrian use – trails, camping. Open the Ozark Scenic Trail all the way for equestrians, and improve camping facilities like water and fire rings for equestrians. (SW, written)
- Provide more equestrian trails and camping and open the Ozark Trail all of the way through for equestrians. Attract tourists with trails including better camping facilities. “Riding gravel roads is hot, dusty and often times dangerous with traffic that doesn’t know what to do when meeting a horse. Are you telling hikers to hike on the roads?” (SW, written)
- A representative of Southwest Missouri Trail Riders wants more MDC effort to provide horse trails. The group adopted trails at Lead Mine CA, but wants to see more coming back from MDC for their efforts. MDC closed 3 trails at Lead Mine CA, and speaker doesn’t understand why. (SW)

Continuation: What MDC Heard... Horse Use, Dog Use and Field Trials

- Participant says the Ozark Trail is open to horses everywhere except on MDC land, and does not like that. (SW)
- Participant would like to see little things along horse trails like fire rings. Keep open what has been open – not asking for more, but don't take what is already there. (SW)
- Rudolf Bennitt CA shows some evidence of horse damage. If that sort of horse-related damage is allowable, why not also let people use ATVs to bring out deer? The road into the bottoms has been closed, so it would help a lot to not have to drag deer up the hill to parking areas. (NE)
- A member of Missouri Back Country Horsemen was concerned about a decision not to let horses use Ozark Trail segments on MDC areas. Was it really thought through and concerns about damage to the areas documented? How were local managers involved? Are there soil studies and other data behind the decision? (NW)
- The horse trails at Crooked River CA are much appreciated. Riders want to see more riding areas – not necessarily internal trails, perhaps just permission to ride the perimeter. Participant's riding group is glad to help clean up trails, likes the leave-no-trace rule practiced by some horseback groups. If more land were open to horse use, less trash and damage would be concentrated in the comparatively few areas where riding is now allowed. (NW)
- Equestrian trails need to be separate from trails for people. They require different things, can go different places and need to be managed differently. (NW)
- Provide more equestrian trails. (OZ, written)
- Provide additional equestrian trails. (OZ, written)
- Provide multi-use trails on all Conservation land – at least trails around the perimeter. (NW, written)
- More equestrian trails, especially on MDC areas. (NW, written)
- More equestrian trails. (NW, written)
- More horse trails or multi-use trails. (NW, written)
- Multi-use trails, in cooperation with horse clubs. (NW, written)
- More equestrian trailheads, trails, water spigots, large trailer parking, facilities for handicapped/physically challenged equestrians. (NW, written)
- Multi-use (including horses) trails on larger CAs. Horses and wildlife can complement each other when managed properly. (NW, written)
- More equestrian trails. (NW, written)
- I personally like the horse trails and the fishing. (OZ, written)

Field Trials

- Field trial areas should be managed for field trials. (NW, written)
- An active field trialer who helped judge national championships this year in Eureka, KS, reports that there are 5 main trial areas in Missouri but not as many good grounds as ten years ago. That represents an economic cost to the state, because it loses events like the national championships – which benefited Eureka, KS, by over \$2 million last year. (KS)
- NW region needs more properly manage field trial areas. (NW, written)
- NW region needs more “good quality bird dog, horse back field trial grounds.” (NW, written)

What MDC Said . . . Horse Use, Dog Use and Field Trials

- Horse trail maintenance is a serious issue, one MDC must deal with on the land for which it is steward. The Department likes to work with equestrian friends, and especially appreciates groups that take active roles in trail development and maintenance.
- In the three places the Ozark Trail crosses MDC land, neighbors to our area have closed the trail to horse traffic on their private lands. While some want more open horse access to the Ozark Trail, others strongly oppose opening further trails to horses.
 - Present MDC policies are based on a compromise reached in 1981 when the Conservation Commission first approved the Ozark Trail's designation across Department lands. Approval was based on the concept of a primitive hiking trail for foot traffic, and anticipated no expenditure to build the bridges, widths, and reinforced substrates, etc. needed for horse use. Recently the Conservation Commission confirmed the long-standing policy keeping it closed to horses.
 - Specific studies were not needed on the Ozark Trail, because available experience and research is plentiful on areas with similar soil and topography.
 - The Department continues to respect the original concept of the Ozark Trail as a primitive hiking trail. It has also built and looked at possibilities for building horse trails elsewhere. Hiking and horse riding trails require different things, and the two user groups sometimes can conflict.

Deer Management

Deer restoration is a well-known “conservation success story,” but yesterday’s cries to “bring back the deer” have in some cases been supplanted by “too many deer!” MDC deer management historically was designed to restore, grow and maximize deer herds, and there are still some areas where low populations warrant this approach. In the majority of the state, however, we more often hear about overpopulation. As a result, strategic emphasis is shifting to better herd control and in some places herd reduction.

Major changes were made to deer management strategies in 2004, following an extensive series of public meetings held in each of 30 communities around Missouri. Input from these meetings helped guide changes to the Wildlife Code which encourage hunters to harvest more deer and balance the composition of the herd. Some changes, notably the antler point restriction and telecheck process, are effectively “pilot programs” applied to a limited area or group of people. It will likely take three to five years to see how those pilot programs work, at which time decisions will be made whether to apply them more widely or try something else.

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a concern that has substantially affected deer herds and hunting rules in some states. MDC completed three years of testing during the 2004 deer season, with final results of 2004 testing due from the laboratories by the end of May. No infections were found in the first two years. The issue will continue to be carefully monitored.

What MDC Heard . . . Deer Management

Deer Damage

- A Columbia landowner has 7-9 resident deer, part of a city-wide problem. Urban rules (hunting limitations, no off-leash dogs) complicate management. He encourages more in-town archery hunting and a longer season. (CE)
- The Howard County Farm Bureau is especially interested in controlling wildlife damage. A spokesman commends efforts to hold or down-size deer herd and help landowners address economic hardships associated with wildlife depredation. (CE)
- Deer and turkey are overpopulated in Knox County. What is to be done? (NE)
- Is any thought being given to a damage payment (e.g., \$2/acre) to landowners because of deer/turkey damage to crops? (NE)
- Don't hesitate to lengthen the hunting season to keep the deer population under control. Today's problems mostly reflect successes, e.g., deer, groundhogs and beaver are causing problems at his home. (CE)

Antler Point Restrictions

[Note: there are many entries on this topic in part because the NW Region, which includes many of the pilot regulation counties and whose forum occurred after the close of firearms deer season, asked participants a question about how they liked it.]

- How were counties picked to include an antler point restriction pilot? (NE)
- Did we study results in other states before starting antler point restrictions? (NE)
- How long before pilot leads to decisions? (NE)
- Applaud you on antler point restriction, hope it will expand. (SW)

Continuation: What MDC Heard...Deer Management

- Like antler point restrictions. (SW)
- Participant saw more deer this year, but expressed concern that the four-point restriction may encourage people to waste dead deer whose points don't measure up after the kill. He reported a couple instances where he found a deer that didn't qualify under 4-pt rule, evidently shot and left behind. (KC)
- Fifteen years ago, Missouri was a "big buck" state, but no longer. Is it genetically smart to shoot all the young bucks with big antlers and leave those with small antlers to live and breed? (NW)
- A trophy hunter who also hunts for meat asks why the earn-a-buck approach was not taken. He reports seeing a lot of undersize deer carcasses left in the field this year. (NW)
- I like it, think most hunters support the point restriction in hopes of bigger bucks. (NW, written)
- I disagree with current strategies on deer. I hunt birds and saw 5 dead deer left lying on 160 acres – 4 were bucks smaller than 4 points, 1 doe. (NW, written)
- Doe reduction is needed and the antler restriction is good. Suggest unlimited doe tags to land owners, and allowing land owners to telecheck all deer they take. (NW, written)
- People expect more deer shot and left in the field because they don't meet the criteria. Also am told that deer are declining in NW MO because so much habitat is being destroyed by farmers clearing ground. (NW, written)
- Antler restriction must be enforced. Don't kill big does, wrong to kill the base of our deer herd and likely to wind up with runts only if big deer are all taken. (NW, written)
- Don't like antler restriction, especially for archery. Concentrate season to early November, then open quail from Thanksgiving to 2-15. (NW, written)
- Good! continue it [point restriction rule]! (NW, written)
- [Point restriction is] good! Maybe go to 6 point. (NW, written)
- I like the point restriction because it will get bigger bucks. Numbers of deer are down because of high proportion of does. (NW, written)
- 4-point restriction is great, keep it! Consider moving firearms season out of the rut, allowing that time for archery or muzzleloader only. (NW, written)
- [The point-restriction is a] good concept, [but] more [is] needed including a change in the hunting season. (NW, written)
- I agree with concept, but skeptical until I see results. This may cause small bucks to be killed and left. (NW, written)
- [Participant] used to favor earn-a-buck, but after this season sees the advantages of the 4-point restriction (NW, written)
- Need to harvest more does. Four-point restriction is good, but may need to add earn-a-buck or something else. (NW, written)
- 4-point rule will decrease quality of the gene pool – small antlered bucks will have an unnatural breeding advantage. (NW, written)
- Non-hunter thinks population has benefited from 4-point rule and will soon provide more chance for people to harvest trophy-sized animals. (NW, written)
- 4-point restriction is great, but might improve by other steps: (1) draw for buck tags; (2) for one year, charge \$30 for an unlimited doe tag – when you check in one doe you get another tag. (NW, written)
- Happy to see antler restrictions – hope this continues! (NW, written)
- Set an antler reserve on MDC areas for larger bucks to grow. Keep 4-point restriction but open season for firearms on Dec. 1. (NW, written)

Continuation: What MDC Heard...Deer Management
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- 4-point restriction is good – keep up the unlimited antlerless deer tags. (NW, written)

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)

- What is happening in surrounding states on CWD?
- What is the status of the testing for Chronic Wasting Disease? (NW)
- Heard that there is CWD deer in Nemaha Co, Nebraska.

Urban Deer

- How was Webster County included in “urban deer” hunting counties? (SW)
- I do not believe that the south half of Cass County should be in the Urban Deer Unit. (SW, written)
- Participant reports that earlier this year an article came out in the paper about an urban deer hunt, including rifles. As it turned out, the hunting in urban sites was still restricted. How does hunting with firearms outside the city limits count as an “urban deer hunt?” (KC)
- Participant was part of a managed hunt at Lake Jacomo, and was concerned with the actions of some hunters. Some left their stands and did a “deer drive,” a legal method but not safe in those circumstances. Also witnessed people shooting from the road and out the back of a pickup.
- Are you still using sharpshooters to control urban deer? (NW)
- The growing population of deer in urban areas is a problem, especially deer/vehicle incidents. Suggest a longer season for antlerless deer in urban areas. (KC, phone input)
- Encourage more urban areas to allow bow hunting. (CE)
- Pressure the Springfield City Council to allow bow hunting within the city limits. (SW, written)

Ideas to Harvest More Deer

- Deer are not as thick in the Ozarks as they are in north Missouri, and landowner permits may be overly generous: the large landowner with many kids can kill dozens of deer. Won't we kill off the herd in a few years with such liberal bag limits? (OZ)
- Rep. Lager has heard a lot about deer harvest – up statewide, perhaps down in NW Missouri – and wants to know if MDC believes the situation is getting better? (NW)
- Is the doe harvest up or is it antlerless deer? Each button buck in the antlerless count means one fewer doe harvested. A check station known to participant counted 57 button bucks, harvested as “antlerless” but which leave 57 does to fawn, and they will more than replace those button bucks by spring. Button bucks should be tagged as bucks. (NW)
- A landowner suggests that landowners be allowed to take more does without buying a permit. His family has taken 25 does (he no longer allows hunters to kill bucks) on his 150 acres this year, pushed there by urban sprawl near Smithville. Some were on landowner tags, others on purchased tags. He likes the “telecheck” option, and would like to see more free tags and an option to contribute to Share the Harvest without having to pay processing costs. You can best get landowners to partner on increasing doe harvest by giving them more free permits. He's not looking for “party hunting,” just more permits. (NW)
- Deer hunting is good in Missouri, and the department is right to work on increase doe/buck harvest ratio. How about allowing buck harvest for 2 days only, then limit the rest of the season to does only? (NW)
- If the Department wants does harvested, it needs to find a way to fund processing costs. Can MDC do that? Share-The-Harvest is not fully funded here, making it costly for people who want to take deer but not waste it. (NW)

Continuation: What MDC Heard...Deer Management
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- Big bucks are easier to find during the rutting season, one reason most adjoining states don't schedule their seasons during the rut. If the goal is to take more does, wouldn't it make sense to move the rifle season later, say back to December after the rut? (NW)
- Want to see more deer harvest. (NW, written)
- Frequent hunter thinks deer are getting less in quality, and Missouri may have to go back to a short buck season followed by longer season for does only. (NW, written)

Deer Seasons and Permits

- Would like to see some of the deer permits now given to landowners given instead to muzzleloader hunters. I have problem with taking more deer, but landowners get too many opportunities to kill deer. (SE)
- Is there a possibility to have special deer permits for the muzzleloader hunter? Archers get their season plus the option to firearms hunt – but muzzleloaders have to choose. Archery options have been expanded, so maybe it is time to do the same for muzzleloaders, perhaps another deer and maybe an extra antlerless permit for that season. Otherwise Missouri loses these hunters to Illinois and Kentucky (gives two permits). (SE)
- Suggest not applying the antler point restriction to hunters under 16 – it is most important that they get a taste of success. Why not let hunters in youth season kill more than one doe? (NE)
- Would like to have the extra days added to the end of the Archery season rather than the front. September 15 opening necessitate haste to get meat out of the woods or risk spoilage. Archery hunters now share woods with urban season hunters, and have one-day of conflict by having to wear hunter orange. (SE)
- Why is the cost of deer permits going up? (SL)
- Why not make doe permits cheaper if you want to harvest more does? (NE)
- Why not adopt walk-in hunt program like KS, AR, paying landowner for access? (SW)
- Southeast Missouri didn't benefit from the deer season extension because the 15 days were added on the front end. Similarly with turkey season. The southern part of Missouri deserves better consideration in setting season dates. (SE)
- Archery hunters in this area are not helped by 15 days on front – we are “getting the shaft” because we have to buy a tag to hunt during firearms season even though not using gun. At the same time, firearms hunters are now crowding the bowhunters out late in the season. (KC)
- Longer deer seasons crowd out a lot of quail hunting. One participant reports reluctance to take his family out – to hunt, to run the dogs, to otherwise enjoy the quail – because of all the rifles in the woods. A later deer season would help with this. (NW)

Miscellaneous

- Share-the-Harvest is a real success, and participant asks if it could be expanded to provide donated deer to the prisons – reducing food costs while encouraging doe harvest. If the state could figure out what we spend on prison beef, it could rededicate that to fund USDA-approved processing for prison needs. (NW)
- Moving rifle deer season back to Dec. 1 would give more safe time afield for quail and pheasant hunters. (NW)

- Participant wants MDC to listen to the public when comments are given and have good fact based information to inform decisions. (NW, written)
- Telephone check-in is fantastic! Expand Share-the-Harvest beyond the urban season. (NW, written)
- Don't hunt deer, just watch them. (NW, written)
- Do not hunt deer. (NW, written)
- Deer thriving, harvest increasing – Missouri is doing something right even in face of suburban sprawl. (NW, written)
- Need to increase harvest with a longer season – too much pressure in too few days.

What MDC Said . . . Deer Management

- Antler point restrictions were chosen among several options to further deer management goals. The current rule:
 - Was based on input at public meetings last winter, in preference to “earn-a-buck,” December firearms season and other options;
 - Applies to a few counties, with counties added to the original list based on public input received;
 - Will be evaluated as a pilot program, and probably no changes will be made for 3-5 years, although there is flexibility to move quicker if public response indicates;
 - Reflected consideration of the best available research and experience of other states, like Pennsylvania whose experience suggests point restrictions will shift harvest toward does.
- MDC has heard suggestions that it should make payments for deer damage. This has not been done, partly because of concerns that it may not be legally permissible. There are other good reasons not to do this, perhaps starting with the practical difficulty of finding a fair payment process. Deer damage is not always easy to distinguish from other damage, and some deer collisions are avoidable.
- The city of Columbia is one of several urban communities working hard to address deer issues. It allows bow hunting within city limits, and even some hunts on city properties.
- Illinois and Nebraska are neighboring states which have documented cases of CWD, each having it in very limited range.
- A genetic impact from the antler point restriction seems unlikely, but we will be carefully watching data related to it. Many things besides genetics affect antler size. Age is important, and the key goal of the point restriction is to get more deer into older age classes. We believe Missouri's big bucks are fewer because we shoot at a higher rate than neighboring states, and that we are not at risk of “high-grading” big-antlered bucks out of the population.
- Checking harvested deer is still important, but we are looking at options to improve the system and better meet management and hunter needs. Check stations provide important research and harvest data, and help enforce the Wildlife Code. Several changes are being carefully monitored before statewide or long term decisions are made:

Continuation: What MDC Said...Deer Management

- We now allow 24 hours instead of requiring same-day checking.

- We are experimenting with a telephone checking system for landowners. It works nicely for the honest people, although we are still unsure if it provides an adequate tool for enforcement.
- Reaction has been mostly positive and evidence to date indicates that the two methods work about the same for data gathering.
- We will evaluate carefully and consider use by more than landowners – but only if the pilot shows we can still catch poachers out there.
- The 15-day early deer-season add-on was largely motivated by the need to reduce deer/vehicle collisions. This year the early season harvested 6,000 deer, which helped. We need a lot of people out hunting to control the herd. Conflicts are inevitable as more people have more opportunities.
- The expanded urban deer hunting regions were identified based on counties affected by urban sprawl and high deer collision statistics. Even though Webster County is largely rural, it met the same standards.
- MDC contributes about \$100,000 per year for Share-The-Harvest (STH), which is administered by the Missouri Conservation Federation. Many companies and private organizations supplement MDC funds. At least \$35 worth of processing is reimbursed, and private donations increase that amount substantially in many areas. STH depends on local sponsors who coordinate distribution and reduce the contributors out-of-pocket cost.
- Share-the-Harvest only began after a special statute was passed amending health codes. That amendment was very specific, so the codes probably would not allow use of harvested deer in the prisons without a statute change.
- Moving the deer season later has been considered, and was popular with archers but not with firearms hunters. Even though the rutting season is over, we have no evidence that a later season would save bucks. Indeed, with the number of hunters we put in the woods (two or three times as many as neighboring states boasting bigger bucks) a change in dates does not seem likely to significantly shift kill from bucks to does.

Turkey Management

Missouri is the premier turkey hunting state in the nation, with spring and fall seasons that draw substantial numbers of hunters from other states. The three-week spring season is estimated to be worth \$33 million to state economy. Is this “as good as it gets” or can we make Missouri turkey hunting even more significant?

Turkey restoration is a conservation success story in most of the state, but turkey management gets constant and careful reexamination. In a few areas, turkey reintroduction never really succeeded, and efforts are underway to increase stocking rates in some of them. In other areas, success has been so good that reports of “too many turkeys” have become common.

One big question under consideration at the end of 2004 was whether to change MDC’s traditional and conservative “mornings-only” season into all-day turkey hunting. Some liberalization of the fall season is planned, but the Conservation Commission wants to take time and listen carefully before making changes to the spring season.

What MDC Heard . . . Turkey Management

All-Day Turkey Hunting?

- Support all-day turkey hunting, keep dates the same and enhance access for all Missourians. (CE)
- No all-day spring turkey hunting. I think one of the reasons Missouri’s turkey population is so large and healthy is because the hunting pressure is lighter with the 1p.m. end. (CE)
- Leave Turkey Season closing time at 12-1 p.m. Turkey’s need a break. If they get busted off their roost where will they go, plus it makes them vulnerable to predators if they become lost or unable to re-roost for the night. (CE)
- I don’t see a need for all day turkey hunting. (NE, written)
- There is a rumor that spring turkey may be allowed all day and that is a bad idea. (SL)
- What is the push behind all-day turkey hunting? (NE)
- Turkey season “ain’t broke” so don’t fix it. Participant has been a guide, and says Missouri has the best turkey hunting in nation. All-day hunting and 2-bird bag limit should be instituted carefully then monitored. Have a special turkey forum if major changes are in the works. (SW)
- Participant is “terribly concerned about extending turkey season to all day: I fear there will be much more harm than good” (SW, written)
- As for the idea of all-day turkey hunting, the present system is working so don’t fix it! You might consider increasing the first week bag limit to two birds. (OZ)
- Missouri turkey hunting was a well kept secret for years but conservative management has brought over ½ million turkeys to the state. The three week season seemed risky at first, but hasn’t been the undoing of the turkey season. Keep re-evaluating the regulations as seasons go on. We need to cooperate with MDC to put habitat back. (SE)

Continuation: What MDC Heard...Turkey Management

Miscellaneous

- A man who has taught school for 28 years would like to see turkey season start on Sat instead of Monday, just to reduce absenteeism from class. (OZ)
- The National Wild Turkey Federation is a good organization. Thanks in large part to its help, Missourians are now able to get 6 deer and 6 turkey. (SW) [Editor's note: turkey hunters may take 2 turkeys with each of spring firearms, fall firearms, and fall archery tags. Deer hunters have many more options than a decade ago, and in many counties may fill any number of Antlerless permits.]
- Participant complimented MDC, recalling his youth in Morgan Co when both deer & turkey were rare sights. (NW)
- Please consider a longer spring bow hunting season for turkeys. Kansas has a 2-month season. (NW)
- Fall turkey season is too short – how about 2 months? (NW)
- Deer and turkey are overpopulated in Knox County. What is to be done? Will expanded bobcat trapping hurt flock control? (NE)
- Caney Mountain's fall muzzleloader shotgun turkey hunt and spring archery only hunts are unique and appreciated, something one participant would hate to see changed. This a good place to provide a good special opportunity for turkey hunting. Don't change that 5,500 acres to statewide regulations and take away a unique and special hunting activity for muzzleloaders. (SE)

What MDC Said . . . Turkey Management

- Turkey and bobcat populations have grown in size together in NE Missouri. Therefore, it is not likely that bobcat predation is a major threat to turkeys, nor is it a major limit on flocks becoming too large. Many other predators also impact turkeys. It is unlikely that increased bobcat trapping will have much effect on turkeys.
- Both the Missouri Conservation Federation and the Missouri National Wild Turkey Federation have endorsed a switch to all-day turkey hunting, but there are many who want to stay with the conservative approach that has made Missouri the state with the best turkey hunting. MDC biologists have different opinions, but no strong sense that all-day hunting would hurt populations in most of the state. A change in the half-day turkey rule is some time away, and MDC does not intend to be hasty in removing the limit.
- The Department is aware of the advantages to opening the turkey season on Saturday, but opted for a Monday opener for safety reasons. Unfortunately, turkey season hunting accidents are a continuing problem and avoiding the over crowding associated with opening on Saturday still makes a lot of sense. Please note that the youth portion of the season, scheduled prior to the regular season, helps alleviate the school absenteeism on opening day.

Quail and Small Game

While this section is titled “quail,” it is really about far more. The bobwhite’s song is the proverbial “canary in the coal mine” for many other species with similar habitat needs and in similar decline.

Quail have grown scarce in recent decades, a trend in all regions of the country. There is a nationwide effort to develop plans to reverse the decline, and there is consensus among experts that habitat is the major underlying problem behind declining quail populations. Many factors affect quail, including predators and chemicals, but these factors do not seem to be a problem where habitat is good. Because there are so many factors involved in quail decline, no simple “quick fix” will bring them back.

Quail are more specific in their habitat requirements than deer and turkey, and maintaining those needs requires a level of active intervention that is not always practical today. In short, the landscape and agricultural practices of fifty years ago better suited the needs of quail than what is here today.

Quail do not range over the broad areas that deer and turkey do, so restoration “victories” are likely to be much more localized than with larger, more mobile species. Managing quail on conservation areas teaches us that restoration at any site may take significant time and continuous attention, and that the work has a strictly local impact. MDC owns less than 2% of our state’s land, and most of that is in timber.

Success in returning quail depends almost entirely on private landowners and their willingness to manage their lands in quail-friendly ways. Many landowner decisions are driven by federal farm programs, and improving Farm Bills have brought many federal dollars into play for practices that can help quail. MDC works with those federal programs to help quail with services and programs that are entirely voluntary. Forty Private Land Conservationists (PLC’s), rising to fifty next year, work in offices of the Federal Natural Resource Conservation Service - overseer of federal agricultural funds. PLC’s have listed quail as a top priority.

The Conservation Commission has made a commitment to quail restoration, not giving up in spite of various problems. MDC’s Private Land Services Division is in the forefront of efforts to improve the status of quail, but success depends almost entirely on the private sector. Landowners as well as hunters, birders and private organizations are essential to efforts that improve habitat and increase other landowners’ interest and awareness.

What MDC Heard . . . Quail and Small Game

Quail Season

- Quail season opening the first of November is too early in the southern counties as the weather is more like the middle of October. (SE)
- Splitting the Quail season across the state would be good for quail. (SE)

Continuation: What MDC Heard...Quail and Small Game

- If an extended quail season is considered for the bootheel, consider closing hunting at 3:00 p.m. to allow coveys to regroup before nightfall. (SE)
- Would like to see the quail season set a little later in the Bootheel or a split season for the southern most counties as tried back in 1986 or so. A local Quail Unlimited Chapter has petitioned the Conservation Commission for this, and obtained 150 signatures. We don't care where the boundary lines are drawn, but just would like the season changed from Nov. 1 to about November 20 in the Bootheel. (SE)
- Would like to see quail season set later in the Bootheel. November 1 is too early for quail season in the Bootheel. When you have green grasses still in fields you have to hunt ditches to protect your dogs. In the warmer temperatures dogs are done hunting in 15 to 20 minutes because of the heat if you don't hunt the ditches. There is no frost yet by November 1 and these conditions are not conducive to hunting quail. Conditions are different in the southern part of the state. (SE)
- The deer seasons have been getting longer, crowding out a lot of quail hunting. One participant reports reluctance to take his family out – to hunt, to run the dogs, to otherwise enjoy the quail – because of all the rifles in the woods. A later deer season would help with this. (NW)

Quail Management

- Providing quail habitat will also benefit rabbits and other small game. (SE)
- Applause for MDC efforts to restore bobwhite quail: "It will work because we are going to make it work." Quail Unlimited Chapter in Dexter will help with the restoration in any way they can. (SE)
- Glad to see programs available for nesting areas for quail for landowners.
- Quail understanding needs to be encouraged among every group of landowners, not just the farmers. Ditches, irrigation corners, etc. do not have to be lost land for quail. (SE)
- MDC should work with landowners adjacent to MDC areas for better understanding of quail habitat needs. It takes more than just planting food plots to keep quail in the area. (SE)
- The MDC program providing seed to private landowners is good, but the Department should consider adding quail-beneficial grasses to the mix. (SL)
- More emphasis should be given to increasing quail population. Help is especially important to urban owners of rural land. Consider providing loaner/rental implements for conservation practices, e.g., harrows, spreaders and seeders that you could pull behind ATVs. (SL)
- It is the quail's turn to be a Missouri Conservation success. Federal and MDC attention to quail has helped energize our new QU chapter. We believe it is possible, even in the bootheel, to bring quail back like deer/turkey were brought back. (SE)
- The quail situation is bad and needs attention. (SL)

What is Causing Decline?

- Participant has seen information indicating that mold growing on soybeans sterilizes quail, but doesn't kill them. (SE)
- Has the Department looked at how chemicals – agricultural chemicals, residue in poultry waste, etc. – affect Bobwhite quail, litter size and sterilization of birds? (SE)
- Quail problems result from change in food production. The American farmer is farming more land and cutting down cover that used to be suitable for quail. Production of food has taken over habitat. (SL)
- Participant who raises quail agrees with a lot of what MDC does, but believes turkeys hurt the quail population by eating the young. MDC ought to allow released quail. MDC worries about turkey & deer more than quail. (SW)

Continuation: What MDC Heard...Quail and Small Game

- Participant with farm in WHIP has seen some improvement in quail numbers. Two years ago he trapped 79 raccoons & possums and saw quail numbers go up, but they went back down when he didn't trap last year. Note that when quail populations were good, coon hides were bringing \$50 each. (NW)
- Tall warm season grasses can be as deadly to quail as fescue. Predators also seem to this participant to be a real factor in the decline. (NW)
- Participant reports an Iowa study saying roundup-ready corn and beans sterilize quail. (NW)
- Many quail hunters noted that the turkey populations went up in the same time period that quail populations "went to heck." From this they argue that the turkey must somehow be killing out the quail. Is that plausible or a fallacy? (NW)
- Kansas runs its quail season thru end of Jan, and it's not that different climatically from NW Missouri. Later quail hunting might make up for some of the reduction due to deer hunters. (NW)
- Do you think coyotes and bobcats have had a role in the decline of quail? (NW)
- Predator/prey relationships have gone on for eons, and where there is proper habitat, the prey does fine. When habitat is poor, there is problem. It appears that the predators are dominant, but in fact poor habitat is killing both. (NW)
- Iowa is talking about putting a bounty on cougars, but bounties on predators are a bad idea. (NW)
- The Missouri Conservationist magazine did well with its recent article on feral cats and the damage they can do to birds and wildlife. One participant believes that feral cats are a key factor in quail and songbird declines, and wants the Department to take a strong stand against free-roaming cats. (NW)

Reversing the Decline

- Participant attended Quail Academy when younger, found it valuable and hopes it continues. (NE)
- Participant congratulates the state for its many wildlife success stories, but notes that quail have largely disappeared. He chose to live here because he wanted to quail hunt, but now goes to Oklahoma to hunt quail. He's done a lot on his land to improve habitat, but does not see it doing any good. Isn't there more to it than just "habitat" improvement? What is the focus of MDC's program to remedy the problem? (NW)
- How is MDC taking advantage of the last farm bill with its many new incentives for quail management? (NW)
- With the help of MDC staff (Bill White), participant reported working to change his 220 acres for better quail – quail counts, burning, cover changes and "doing what they say." It is working! CRP is an important part of improving quail, too. Its first round of CRP could have been monitored a lot better, but the program is much improved now. (NW)
- Can CRP land be sometimes hayed or grazed instead of burned, especially in dry years? That might help quail somewhat. (NW)
- Provide assistance to private land owners in developing native grasses (small acreage). (NW, written)

Other

- Participant reads in the Missouri Conservationist that MDC is providing increased funding for private landowners to use managing quail. Is the magazine the only place you report this? (OZ)

Continuation: What MDC Heard...Quail and Small Game

- Quail are not the only animals we used to see a lot but that are now rare. There used to be big bullhead catfish in the creeks, but no more. There used to be lots of night crawlers. Is it possible that pesticides have killed so many worms and bugs at the bottom of the food chain that all populations have been hurt? Do pesticides kill quail or bullheads directly? (NW)
- What is the WHIP program and how is it doing? (NE)
- How is quail management progressing? (NE)

What MDC Said . . . Quail and Small Game

- The important message the Department gets at these meetings is that a lot of people care about the quail decline. There is no quick cure, but we believe that if enough people want a quail comeback, it will happen. We have areas and know many private lands where habitat improvement has substantially increased quail.
- A split quail season has been tried, in part to address climate difference in the delta-lands of southeast Missouri, notably different from the rest of the state. There is also a lot to be said for simplicity. Biologists say that opening the season later would mean killing the birds that would normally make it through the season and later produce.
- Quail Academy is a good program accomplished in partnership with Quail Unlimited. We completed one academy session in 2004. We may schedule more, but may also try alternatives to find the most effective way to use staff time and budget.
- Predators are a factor in quail survival, but we don't have data saying it is dominant. In good habitat, both quail and predators thrive. In poor habitat, predators (hawks, coyotes, raccoons, turkeys, feral cats, etc.) may indeed administer the final blow to quail. Controlling predators is difficult today because trapping is the primary control. It wasn't that long ago that Missouri had 100,000 trappers, but today the number is less than 30,000.
- A quail needs a habitat with insects in the area. If habitat does not provide for insects there will be few quail, if any. The pesticide theory is intriguing, but research we are familiar with does not indicate it is "the" big problem for quail and other small game. Quail are in trouble across their range, not just in areas where pesticide use is heavy.
- There is no biological evidence that turkeys are "the" problem for quail. However, in marginal habitat it may be expected that turkeys, which are pretty versatile, may succeed while quail, which have very special needs, decline.
- Many landowners today are not farmers, and it is harder to get practices onto the ground. We take every opportunity to connect such owners with the expertise, equipment, and Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) funding that allows them to make their land better for wildlife.
- Hunter safety is a top priority, and everyone must make good judgments about when and where to hunt. Statistically the risk from deer hunters to properly attired quail hunters is small. Quail, pheasant and deer seasons all have a biological basis – hunters taking what winter would otherwise kill – that drives much of the timing. That implies that overlapping seasons, like the deer and quail, are probably inevitable.
- The Magazine returns to the feral cat issue periodically, with the most recent article in March 2003, a previous one in June 1999.
- The Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP), is an important federal program that pays for many conservation practices. More information may be found online at www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/whip/.

Waterfowl

Waterfowl hunting is historically important to Missouri, and waterfowl hunters have long been crucial to the future of the conservation movement. Market hunting early in the 20th century and human changes to land and river habitats throughout the century had significant impacts.

The North American Waterfowl Management Plan and state efforts to support it have led to significant improvement in recent years. Areas managed by MDC and refuges managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service continue to provide reliable habitat along the major flyways today.

Since most waterfowl are interstate and international travelers, regulation can be complex. Missouri must regulate within a federal framework, and that framework is periodically reviewed. A review is now underway and in 2006 the public will have another opportunity to make suggestions and the state an opportunity to change seasons and zones.

The present framework was set in 2001, when states were given 3 options and had to choose one that would stay in place for 5 years. Public meetings were in 2000 to hear concerns, and similar meetings may be anticipated in the future.

What MDC Heard . . . Waterfowl

Zones:

- Duck zone lines should more closely match the Department's administrative regions. (CE)
- Landowner with a Wetland Reserve Program site in Dark Cypress bottom would like his area to be in south zone. (SE)
- Participant would like to have Duck Creek CA placed into a different zone. Zone boundaries are not the biggest issue, but would like to see Duck Creek and Otter Slough in the South Zone. (SE)
- Participant has seen some disappointing things and worked with a lot of MDC staff on waterfowl & prairies. A recommendation some years back advocating 3 zones was initially approved, then changed. The three-zone system was working, but changed hastily over too few complaints. The Department needs to be more assertive. (SW)
- Duck season is too early in October for SE Missouri. (SE)
- One who hunts regularly at Duck Creek reports always doing better early in the season. Moving the season later doesn't make sense to him. (SE)

Area Management

- Plant more crops again at Duck Creek, replacing grain with grass was a mistake. There were always lots of geese at Duck Creek when crops were planted by permittee farmers, but the population has now decreased. (SE)
- Duck Creek has trouble with the water, and pool 1 now very low. Can wells and pumps be used to correct this, as they are at Otter Slough? (SE)
- Are there any plans to do anything different on the Coon Island CA with moist soils, etc. (SE)
- MDC should open waterfowl refuges for hunting on weekends as the State of Arkansas is doing. (SE)

Continuation: What MDC Heard...Waterfowl

- Eagle Bluffs and other Big Muddy Areas should be managed for more shallow water in the fall to draw shorebirds and waders before the waterfowl hunting season. (CE)

- More wood duck nesting boxes should be installed on the Department areas to increase nesting. Consider a program to build wood duck nesting boxes in the schools and install them on Conservation Areas. (SE)

Geese

- What is being done on refuges is fine, but it seems that geese today are comfortable farther north. Is this because of increase in WRP/wetland habitat state wide? Is this change real or perceived? Missouri habitat has pretty well cut off Stuttgart, Arkansas, from goose action. It seems we have a problem with the amount of ducks and geese held up north. (SE)
- Maybe moist soil management is a problem for ducks and geese. I believe waterfowl like crops better than what grows under moist soil management. (SE)
- In Southeast Missouri, put goose nesting tubs back up to help get geese back down to the southern areas of Missouri. I used to hunt resident geese all winter, but taking down the nesting areas has eliminated the geese in those areas. (SE)
- Winnipeg is holding geese, and the birds have changed their ways since the 1970's and 80's. Rice agriculture has shifted the bird distribution in the bootheel. Birds that winter at Ten Mile Pond may be from either of two flyways, Mississippi or Central. Now geese up north have power plant lakes and other habitat holding them. (SE)
- Could geese from areas with urban goose problems be relocated to the southern part of the region and to Ten Mile Pond CA? 60% of our club's hunters come from out-of-state, and increased goose population may entice more hunters to come to the area which would increase revenue, etc. (SE)

Miscellaneous

- Compliments to MDC on an excellent job with the waterfowl process. (SE)
- Are motorized winged decoys legal this season? (SE)
- 78% of Missouri hunters preferred to keep the option of motorized wing decoys open. Dealing with this best starts with hunters, not regulations. If other waterfowl hunters don't think their use is a good idea, start the process of asking for a regulations change. If you want to traditional duck hunt, start the regulation on Conservation Areas. Be sure it is motorized winged decoys and not motioned winged decoys. Arkansas banned motorized winged decoys this year.
- Why can't the Migratory bird permits be purchased at the same time other permits become available? They can't be purchased until mid-year. How does it affect the numbers if the birds harvested are not counted until next year? (SE)
- Duck hunters at many Department areas, including Ted Shanks CA aren't fully reporting the number of birds they are killing. (CE)
- Applause for an excellent job with the duck season. Everything is great. (SE)

What MDC Said . . . Waterfowl

- Public meeting participants in 2000 expressed southeast Missouri concerns about zone boundaries, but not with unanimity. There were three to four weeks of difference between season date preferences expressed from Dexter and Jackson. Flyway changes have had significant effects on populations here, as have weather and other conditions that now hold

Continuation: What MDC Said...Waterfowl

many geese up north. Department areas in SE Missouri went from a record high harvest to the present "steady" harvest. Our data continues to reveal that 15% of geese are shot on state land, and the remainder on private lands.

- Coon Island Conservation Area has increasingly been affected by Black River flooding, and this has been compromising our best plans for habitat management on the area.
- Refuge areas are important when waterfowl are raising young, but we need to better understand how much land in refuge is enough. A study is now under way, which may lead to reducing or increasing the size of existing refuges. Opening more refuge areas to hunting is possible, but a tiered approach seems likely to be the best.
- MDC has relocated some geese to Duck Creek CA from Forest Park in St. Louis. We will continue to do this when we can, but only with young geese that are not imprinted to return to the urban scene. We can only move goslings, but will continue to look for ways to move problem geese to low-goose sites in SE Missouri.
- Wood duck boxes provide a great example of community conservation efforts. MDC likes to work with schools, scout groups, etc. to get habitat enhancements like these onto our areas and elsewhere.

Fisheries, Streams and Lakes

Fishing is extremely popular in Missouri, and is an important component of the state's tourism and recreation economy. It is a good tool for connecting youngsters of all ages to the outdoors, and to developing an understanding of nature's processes.

What MDC Heard . . . Fisheries, Streams and Lakes

Reservoirs

- Are we doing anything to improve bass fishing in Long Branch Lake? (NE)
- Why put so many stripers in Thomas Hill – are they crowding out bass? (NE)
- Participant on an Economic Development Commission concerned that stocking is needed to keep from losing angler/tourism interest at Long Branch Lake. (NE)
- Novices and bank fishermen can't catch much of anything at Table Rock. What are your plans to change this? Is additional stocking a possibility? (SW)
- What was revenue from permit sales before fish kill in Table Rock? (SW)
- Tracets Foundation requires tournament anglers to weigh in trash before weighing in fish. It is working in Branson Area, where a lot of good fishing has been lost in Table Rock Lake. Tracets will work with MDC to improve habitat, and is considering starting a "Share a Lunker" promotional program. (SW)
- Arizona has lots of clear lakes and MDC should contact western states with older clearer reservoirs to see what they have learned. (SW)
- Participant fishes a lot at Lake Taneycomo, but have not seen a lot of the law enforcement effort needed, especially in late Oct. & Nov. and downstream the restricted area. (KC)
- Participant feels that the rivers in the Ozark Region are overlooked for large reservoirs and city locations. He would like to see more stocking programs and better enforcement. (OZ, written)

Streams

- The Stream Team program is great and has helped one participant, a farmer, to learn and do better. He likes the way it involves youngsters and gets them excited. (NE)
- If you destroy habitat by mining gravel in streams, you can kiss the streams goodbye. Participant is against gravel mining. (SL)
- Stream bank erosion is a serious problem, connected to stormwater management. MDC needs to work with DNR on storm water control. New construction projects should build stormwater retention basins that meter out storm water flow. This is the most important issue we need to address in the urban areas of St. Louis and Kansas City. (SL)
- The streams are getting wider instead of deeper. Erosion drives stream widening, more bank collapse. Wants more information and publicity for a 1990 MDC study on cedar usage for revetments. (SL)
- Stream Team is an outstanding program, but most teams last no more than one year. Refocus that activity to encourage longer term activity, especially with watershed groups. (SW)

Continuation: What MDC Heard...Fisheries, Streams and Lakes

- Urban stream issues are of great concern and MDC should step up efforts to keep streams from becoming “St. Louis-like:” pipes and paved channels. MDC should direct more attention to urban stream issues, and take the lead among agencies to argue for their improvement. (SL)
- Water quality is an incredible resource. Think outside the box on education: put up signs at area entrances saying what watershed the area is in. Explain stormwater drains at accesses – for example how washing your gas tank into a storm drain sends toxic residue to some stream. (SW)
- Stream Teams monitor many water quality statistics. Stream Team data deserves more use, and their role in measurements for stream improvement plans should increase. (KC)
- Keep improving lakes and streams. (SW, written)
- Stream ecology is a passion. Dardenne Creek is a special interest, and it recently suffered from a major sewage dump that killed thousands of fish. Fish kills and pollution lead to fines, and DNR gives fines to local school districts. However, budgets are often cut back to compensate for such “windfalls” and the legislature does the same thing when budgeting for education. Fines and lottery funds should add to an existing education budget, not free up dollars to be spent on other things. (SL)
- Missouri’s Stream Team program is one of the best environmental organizations ever started; MDC needs to know how important it is to the public, and not cut funds. (SL)

Hand-Fishing

- Changes allowing handfishing are not something I would encourage. Rely on the biologists to guide this, and don’t let political pressure push changes through. (written)
- A participant who is “catfish pro” wants to be sure the department shuts down handfishing, and wants to know how to help do that. He has seen a lot of over-harvest on the Missouri River as catfish have gotten bigger, “no one needs 400-500 pounds of fish a day.” (NW)
- Handfishing is good – more sporty, sometimes the fish might win! (NW, written)
- NO! to hand fishing (NW, written)

Miscellaneous

- Encourage future family fishing by funding private land wetland/fish projects and encouraging private landowners to allow public use. (NW, written)
- Like 15” smallmouth regulation, incl. goggle-eye. (SW)
- (1) Modify launching areas to reduce the potential for migration of spilled oil & gasoline into the lake and provide signs to explain the importance of keeping contaminants out of the water. (2) Signage at the entry to all Conservation Facilities advising visitors of the Watershed they are in. (3) Cooperative program with the DOT to identify boundaries of all 8-digit watersheds on all state and federal highways. (SW, written)
- I’d like to see MDC be more pro-active in contacting these homeowners that have acreage along spring branches and streams to protect those waterways. (SW, written)
- Establish reverse slot limits or implement slot limits in streams where there is none. Fishing has gone downhill since May visits 3-4 years ago. (SW, written)
- Instigate a stocking program to create more slack in the environment, also relieve our lakes from constant pressure. (SW, written)
- Participant hears about efforts to stock walleye in the Current River, and wonders why it should not be a steady program of stocking like is undertaken for trout. (OZ)

Continuation: What MDC Heard...Fisheries, Streams and Lakes

- What does the future hold for gigging and giggers on rivers like the Current, Jack's Fork and North Fork? Does gigging in some way compete with trophy trout area designations? On behalf of friends who couldn't be here, is the North Fork about to be closed to gigging? (OZ)
- The bighead carp a big problem for fishermen – safety issues, and a poor substitute for the fish we like to take. (NW)
- Big Lake State Park is a big tourist draw, bluegill stocking appreciated, would like some crappie too. (NW)
- How come Nebraska Fish and Game can take flatheads out of Missouri River to stock them elsewhere? I know four or five people who say they've seen them being loaded into Nebraska trucks. (NW)
- Quail are not the only animals we used to see a lot that are now rare. There used to be big bullhead catfish in the creeks, but no more. There used to be lots of night crawlers. Is it possible that pesticides have killed so many worms and bugs at the bottom of the food chain that all populations have been hurt? Do pesticides kill quail or bullheads directly? (NW)
- More cold water fisheries – improved stocking of existing trout parks – more catch and release areas. (CE)

What MDC Said . . . Fisheries, Streams and Lakes

- MDC will continue to work with DNR to address stormwater and stream destabilization issues. MDC is not regulatory, therefore, we only provide technical support.
- The Department continually stocks trout because they reproduce poorly. With other species, like walleye, the goal is a naturally reproducing population. Continual stocking is costly, and less desirable for species that can naturally reproduce themselves.
- It's hard to say what the long term future of gigging will be, but at the moment there is only one 2-mile stretch of one river, the North Fork, where gigging might close as part of creating a trophy trout management area. Giggers have to move quickly and sometimes hit the wrong mark. Keeping that from happening where there is an important investment in big trout is something we have to figure out how to manage. Trout are a serious tourism and fishing draw, and trophy size trout even more so. If we go to the considerable expense associated with such management, we want the area to get the biggest bang possible.
- Exotic fish, especially Asian carp, are a serious natural problem that afflicts many states. Unfortunately, all these invaders are a lot easier to introduce than to control.
- Missouri River catfishing is a success story, and we believe there has been a great increase in sport fishing.
- Handfishing has been illegal since prohibited by the Legislature in 1918, and the prohibition has been continued by the Conservation Commission since 1936. An organized group of Missourians want it to be legalized, and we have committed to them to again look at the issue scientifically and with an open mind. Previous research in other places supports the present rule, but additional research may confirm or dispute whether the same conclusions are right for Missouri.

Regulations & Permits

The Department has a Regulations Committee chaired by Assistant Director John Smith. Regulations are constantly under review, and recommendations to change them come from many sources, including these forums and letters addressed to the Committee Chairman. An annual process called “code review” gathers input from all department staff and regions, leading to internal proposals. Public input is open at all times, including opportunities to provide direct input at the Committee’s public meetings.

All proposals for changes to the Wildlife Code get a healthy discussion, and most “good ideas” for one group have implications for others. Some proposals have proponents and opponents pulling in different directions. Hearing from the public is an important part of many Regulations Committee meetings and the regulations process. Only when changes have had thorough discussion and input opportunities have been provided, are recommendations carried on to the Director and Conservation Commission. If approved by the Commission, regulations are then printed in the *Missouri Register*, providing an additional period for public input before they are put into effect.

Most regulatory input from the Fall 2004 Forums is in this section, although some input may be found in conjunction with other topics or sections, especially Deer, Turkey and Quail.

What MDC Heard . . . Regulations & Permits

Out-of-State Hunters

- Missourians are often “crowded out” by out-of-state guides on MDC land. They get to hunt here for \$7, far less than Missourians pay to go to their state. (SL)
- The managed deer hunt systems “stinks,” with out-of-state hunters getting too much of the action. The Squaw Creek NWR managed hunt is a good example: the present special hunt should be expanded to allow more hunters in, with preference to Missouri hunters. (SL)
- “I can’t get to hunt in Kansas without going through an outfitter, but Kansans have equal footing” with Missouri residents for Missouri special hunts – Nebraska and Iowa too! The Department should consider favoring the in-state hunters in special hunts – they are the ones who pay the bills. Out-of-state people come here because it’s cheap; we can’t afford to go there. (SL)
- Missouri permits are extremely low-priced compared to other states, and some other states are very high. Permit prices in other states are often set by the legislature, not by their conservation department. (SL)
- Participant would have to pay \$362 for permit to hunt one deer in Iowa – far more than lowans would pay to come here. Why the difference? (NW)

Hunter Safety and Training

- Would like to see hunter orange become a requirement for spring turkey season. (SE)
- Consider making bow hunting education mandatory for purchasing archery permits. (SE)
- A former landowner, who wasn’t required to take a hunter education course when hunting on his own land, objects to taking the course now to hunt on other people’s land. (CE)

Continuation: What MDC Heard...Regulations and Permits

Permits and Check Stations

- Participant likes the check station system, although he believes “a lot of deer killed are not checked.” MDC should keep the check station system. (SE)
- Participant complains that his archery hunting tag is 2 feet long – is there no better way? (NE)
- Wal-Mart sales staff often don’t know what to do with permit sales. (NE)
- Participant likes “getting all my permits at one time, even if it is long and bulky.” (NE)
- MDC should have heeded the adage “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” before instituting the new permits. Today’s permits are too confusing at a time they should be getting easier. That indicates a wrong turn somewhere! (SW)
- Is there any reason not to use a simple permit like Arkansas’ which has only four permits? Missouri gives too many pieces of paper. It is a problem for younger hunters to keep up with and a nightmare for the parents who keep track of everyone’s permits. (SE)
- As a taxpayer, participant would like to know how much is spent on these permits per year on paper supplies? I would like to know the cost, and the number of permits sold and what it costs the taxpayers to print the permits. (SE)
- Professor has worked with students at check stations for 15 years, learning a lot and allowing many kinds of research. He’s concerned that a decision to discontinue check stations might limit ability to monitor the herd. (SW)
- Don’t like to go down and check deer, like to ice it rather than parade it. (SW)

Dogs and deer

- Why is the provision making it illegal to pursue any game animal with dogs during deer season limited to the 10 county area rather than statewide? (OZ)
- A county commissioner said that 23 states allow some form of deer hunting with dogs, and suggested MDC consider permitting the practice for only part of the season – perhaps the second week of the season, or one day added on the end of the season. He believes MDC would save a lot of money, time and hard feelings by providing a way to accommodate those who want to pursue deer with dogs. We will not know if that works and improves overall support for the Wildlife Code unless it is tried. (OZ)

Other Comments

- Will you look at elk restoration again? (SW)
- Will Elk be on public display at Prairie State Park? (SW)
- When are we going to have a good armadillo season in MO? (SE)
- Kansas has what it calls walk-in hunting areas, private lands where private hunting rights have been granted. What is Missouri’s prospect of doing something comparable? (KC)
- Game laws and seasons seem to work well for me. (OZ, written)
- Shannon County convenience store owner has to hire and train extra staff during deer season, and is not sure that the fees collected for checking pay him back for the associated costs. Will MDC take another look at the check station reimbursement rates? (OZ)
- On any-deer, is it possible that telecheck will apply to all hunters, not just landowners? (OZ)
- The Missouri Conservationist magazine did well with its recent article on feral cats and the damage they can do to birds and wildlife. One participant believes that feral cats are a key factor in quail and songbird declines, and wants the department to take a strong stand against free-roaming cats. (NW)

What MDC Said . . . Regulations and Permits

- The Migratory Bird permit serves as the harvest information gathering tool that applies nationwide. Rules at the federal level require that our system provide needed information for the national hunter survey. Allowing sale of this permit early in the year (e.g., March 1) would compromise the waterfowl data – recall that the snow goose Conservation order is in effect until April 30th and affects the Migratory Bird Permit. Good national harvest information is critical: Those who do not accept hunting as appropriate have sued and will likely continue to sue the federal government and states. To date, such suits have not succeeded because sound information from the Migratory Bird Permit stands behind decisions about seasons, limits, and methods.
- There is no easy answer regarding the format of permits, but MDC is sensitive to the request of eliminating unnecessary paper. Permits are part of a management system that includes harvest monitoring, transportation tagging and law enforcement efforts. Our approach to deer and turkey management depends on having permits that are invalidated when a transportation tag is removed. Other states tag differently, but they typically provide fewer opportunities – our permits are part of what enables us to do this.
- People – and MDC – are still deciding whether check stations are essential or can be replaced by alternatives like “telecheck,” pilot tested in 2004 for landowner deer harvest. There will be violations no matter what checking system is in place, and there is need for a balance between a system that satisfies honest people and one that catches the most violators. MDC spends \$0.5 million annually on check stations and is looking at options to reduce that expenditure. When reports are in we will begin evaluating the Telecheck pilot program and will know more and be in a better position to make decisions about the future of check stations.
- Historically the Department has tried to keep the muzzleloader season unique and special, but an increased need to control herd growth may affect this. It may be time to liberalize muzzleloader opportunities.
- The deer dogging regulation originates with complaints from landowners and other hunters in ten counties in the 1990’s. Since all of the complaints came from this 10 county area, the rule was not applied statewide. There were problems, not with dogs actually hunting other game, but with hunters who asserted that their dogs were hunting something else, when in reality they were violating the ban on pursuing deer with dogs. The Department feels an obligation to protect landowners from the problems associated with deer-dogging, and to protect the right of others who hunt by the rules from unwanted dog interference. Hunting with dogs has been heavily discussed for over a decade. Missouri has 500,000 deer hunters, and very few of them want to hunt deer with dogs. Where practiced, deer dogging has led to serious conflict between landowners and hunters. This is counterproductive to the goal of keeping more people involved in deer hunting.
- There is a lot of interest in walk-in hunting on private land, with a Kansas program often mentioned as a model to emulate. Department efforts to encourage something like this have been slowed by landowner liability issues. A law change is needed if landowners are to feel protected. Present law provides liability protection if people are hunting recreationally with the landowner’s permission but not if people are paying, as in the Kansas model.
- Compensation for check stations is an issue we look at regularly. Rates are not supposed to totally reimburse all check station costs, because in most cases businesses derive other benefits from the business drawn in.

- The Regulations Committee will consider increasing the number of free permits to landowners. Landowner cooperation is essential if the herd size is to be controlled because 93% of Missouri land is private, and more than 60% is in agriculture.
- Nebraska and Iowa do not have anything comparable to Missouri's sales tax, so they fund most of their programs from permit fees and choose to charge more. Many neighboring states set permit fees in the legislature, and high prices for out-of-state hunters are often politically popular. There is another side to low-cost Missouri permits for people out-of-state. Low costs draw many hunters to Missouri, and with them a substantial economic benefit. As for deer hunters, many areas of this state report too few hunters taking too few deer. If out-of-state permit prices went up, it might only add to concerns about harvest shortfalls.
- The Department looked carefully at elk reintroduction but decided against it a couple years ago. We will not likely take another close look as long as CWD (chronic wasting disease) is a looming threat.

Outreach and Education

Conservation has a long commitment to public outreach and education, going back to the Education Section created the first year of the Conservation Commission in 1937. The *Missouri Conservationist* magazine circulates to almost one-half million addresses monthly, and newspaper, TV, radio and internet programs are all important tools of public communication at both state and local levels.

Education is a big commitment, and MDC is unique in dedicating a corps of conservation education consultants to work full time with schools and teachers across the state. Together with high quality materials specifically developed to explain the forest, fish and wildlife resources of our diverse state, a powerful effort makes sure teachers can provide future generations with tools and opportunities to better understand the outdoors.

Recent reorganization has drawn the hunter skills program, previously focused primarily on mandatory hunter safety training, into a much closer relationship with other educational programs. Classes beyond the minimal training requirements are increasing, and the system of shooting ranges, conservation nature centers and other facilities are working more closely to provide more entry points for people interested in the outdoors. MDC works closely with many other organizations to build a cooperative system of outdoor education in which many players complement rather than compete with each other.

What MDC Heard . . . Outreach and Education

Ranges and Hunter Training

- Archery is a growing sport, and MDC's archery ranges around the state are appreciated. Participant would like to see more archery ranges, possibly incorporated with gun ranges, and more bow hunting clinics. (SE)
- Participant who just moved here from Arizona was a hunter education instructor there and hopes to become one here. He called for efforts to focus on kids, women, and newcomers to Missouri. These all need more "how-to" information, especially people moving in – they need to know our rules, but also how to adapt skills to the different habitats and opportunities Missouri offers. (SW)
- Participant is proud of MDC and the Andy Dalton Range, and encourages more education programs at the range and elsewhere. (SW)

Programs for Schools

- An agriculture teacher from New Bloomfield expressed thanks for curriculum materials, videos, etc., that both make her job easier and make learning more interesting to students. She hopes to start a high school class in conservation next year. (CE)
- Everyone needs to work at getting youth involved in hunting. Make it a point to take a new youngster hunting every year. MDC should sponsor more youth and women's events, and especially support NWTF's "Archery in Schools" program. Hunting is not the subject of this

Continuation: What MDC Heard...Outreach and Education

program, but once bow skill is learned, many kids get excited enough to seek out hunting opportunities. (SE)

- MDC cut out its environmental education department as a separate unit, and should not have done that. (SL)
- Become more proactive at introducing shooting and archery into schools. (NW, written)

Young Hunters

- Partnership is a good word, and partnership with MDC on a youth conservation corps (YCC) this year was a great experience. It allowed youths to perform many jobs and interact with MDC staff on jobs this past summer on the sand prairie project in Scott County. (SE)
- Ask MDC to continue the work with the YCC and match funding with the Workforce Investment Board. That would help youth, our future voters, to get involved with MDC and learn about the mission of MDC and its programs. This is also a good recruitment method for MDC. (SE)
- Encourage adoption of the Archery in the Schools curriculum into the Missouri schools as is being done in Kentucky and Tennessee. Archery techniques are taught as sports programs through the school. This would increase interest of youth to archery hunting. (SE)
- Participation at the recent Duck Creek youth waterfowl clinic was amazing. Plan youth waterfowl clinics at other waterfowl hunting areas statewide. (SE)
- Compliments for programs that get young people and women involved in hunting. (SE)
- 142 students were involved in participant's 4-H shooting sports program in Vernon County this year, several hundred more in a 4-county area around. The program did well in statewide competition, but a limiting factor is inadequate shooting facilities. A trap field is all they've got now. (KC)

Website

- Maps are valuable, area maps can be obtained from excellent MDC website (www.mdc.mo.gov) (CE)
- MDC needs to review and rework its website, because some pages are out-of-date, as old as 1996. Bring them up-to-date. (SL)
- The MDC website is very difficult to navigate, and participant reports hearing lots of complaints. (SW)
- The e-mail address for subscribing to the Missouri Conservationist doesn't work. (SW, written)

Materials Provided by MDC

- MDC's range of services is awesome, and it should consider a product that simply lists all of the services it provides and explaining how to access each of them. (CE)
- Continue the *Flora of Missouri* project, and publication of other books (SL)
- *The Missouri Conservationist* is an excellent magazine, as is the TV program excellent. Other states have nothing to compare. (KC)
- A participant not native to Missouri came from a state with a lesser conservation program and congratulates Missouri on what it does, suspecting most Missourians support it. She is concerned how the general public can access important information on department

spending and budgetary line item details, having been here “ten years before I learned about the sales tax and *Missouri Conservationist* magazine.” (KC)

Publicity for these Forums

- More students who use MDC areas might have come if announcement for this meeting had been posted on department areas. (CE)
- Participant got the news of this meeting this afternoon, with invitation sent to one office then forwarded. MDC should plan for longer notice of forums. (SL)
- This forum is a good idea, but why is it not advertised in the magazine – that’s how I get my conservation information. (KC)
- Participant didn’t see publicity on the Forum. (KC)

Other Questions and Comments

- Participant was pleased to see the advertisement about Missouri Conservation on TV, but how much did it cost to do those ads? (SL)
- Participant expressed concern that “we are not even coming close to meeting the demand for public education” about the outdoors. All organizations need to come together and see how they can best work together, and MDC should take lead to bring this coordination about and assure best use of limited resources. (SW)
- Plan a series of workshops on Quality Deer Management, including food plot development, care & maintenance. University of Missouri Extension is a possible partner, and a Feb 2003 Clemson University satellite program an excellent model. (SW, written)
- Build and institutionalize a vehicle for developers and community leaders to measure the “conservation quotient” for their community; e.g., percent imperviousness; percent habitat; create numbers that can help market. (KC)
- Provide programs/facilities for youth – teach them to fish (fly and spinning), fish regulations, courtesy on the streams, how to handle fish, catch & release. (CE)

What MDC Said . . . Outreach and Education

- MDC has added a new “web master” to our staff and reorganized our internet procedures. Work is proceeding to update and improve our website.
- Last year MDC budgeted and spent \$500,000 in a paid media campaign to reach out and connect with people in areas that don’t use our services very much. This was stimulated in part by calls to increase state eco-tourism in conjunction with the Tourism Commission.
- Ranges are popular, but expensive to build and staff. We expect our statewide program of building ranges to continue and eventually get to many areas that don’t have them now but need them.
- MDC has worked with youth conservation corps, and has been involved with an intern program aimed at college students this past year, with about 20 interns, currently, statewide.

Forests

Many states have separate Forestry Departments, but Missouri took a different track in 1936 when it charged the newly created Conservation Commission with forestry management. This was important to fish and wildlife conservation, because forest management has a tremendous impact on fish and wildlife.

Forests affect fish in many ways, providing cooling shade to streams, slowing and filtering rainfall, contributing leaves and nutrients at the base of the fish food chain. Trees provide wildlife with shelter, and the mast crop – acorns, nuts and seeds – essential for many species' winter survival. Forest harvest also makes a contribution to wildlife: thick young regrowth provides shelter and safe hiding places interspersed with fruit and seed producing shrubs that die out as the forest matures.

Done poorly, forest harvest can cause erosion or develop mono-cultures that reduce wildlife diversity. Done well, harvest does not cause erosion and encourages better wildlife habitat diversity. Keeping trees in some sort of harvest cycle is generally a good thing for wildlife, especially when the alternative is forest conversion or when hunting is a desired use. Income from forest harvest is important if private landowners are to maintain forest land rather than convert it to a different use, like pasture or development.

MDC manages less than 2% of Missouri's land, about half of that is forested, using harvest as a tool for changing habitats, increasing wildlife diversity and setting a good example. We work with private forest owners to help them manage to meet their own goals, including economic return, without converting a forest into something else. We work with communities to improve urban forests, and to provide good fire protection to forest and other land.

What MDC Heard . . . Forests

- Why allow logging, especially at Lead Mine CA? What is this going to do to the wildlife there... push it to private land that the public can't use? Is logging a benefit to that CA or is it just a financial gain at the expense of the environment? The Department should do more in areas surrounding harvests to increase awareness and inform people as to why, how, when, etc. it will be done. Our initial thoughts are negative, apprehensive about what the area will look like after harvest. Participant has ridden in harvest areas of other states, "ugly" areas where logging has not left much to enjoy – just brush piles and rutted roads. (SW, written)
- Participants heard that a timber harvest is planned on Lead Mine CA. Why do that in an area you are trying to preserve? (SW)
- Timber, I am interested in learning the Department's plan of operation. (OZ, written)
- Trees – I think you're doing a fine job. (OZ, written)
- Timber – the timber is taken out of Shannon County with little benefit to the county. (OZ, written)
- Control of timber cutting – MDC does not adhere to landowners requests. (OZ, written)
- I worry that too much timber is being harvested for what new growth we're getting. (OZ, written)

Continuation: What MDC Heard...Forests

- Participant does not understand reason for clearcuts, and the frequency of harvest activities. He recalled Kerr-McGee land cut in the 70s, recut in the 90s, then sold to MDC. Why not selectively cut rather than clearcut? Why cut so often? (OZ)
- Timber & tourism are big industries in Shannon County, and we see a lot of MDC timber being harvested without seeing those dollars come back into the county. Where do the timber dollars go? (OZ)
- Is there a state forestry plan the state forester can tell us about? Participant is particularly interested in whether we harvest only trees above some minimum size and how we assess and manage skidder damage to young trees. Also, what is the department's stand on chip mills – 50 miles around Williamsville there seem to be no trees left. Would like to see lots of trees still standing, especially important along highways 19 and 160. (OZ)
- When you clearcut do you replant? (OZ)
- Don't eliminate forests to get rid of deer! MDC has done a lot of good things for forests including urban tree management and community forestry. (NW)
- A tree farmer says thanks for forestry help, but wants to see a major educational effort about the use and value of tree harvest. Surveys tell us most Missourians approve of regulated hunting and fishing, but only 47% said they approve of tree harvest! (NW)

What MDC Said . . . Forests

- Forest management varies with site, quality, age, tree type, and many other variables, therefore MDC does not have one "standard forest management practice." In general, we cut timber to improve the nature of the forest or the wildlife habitat it provides – not for money, although timber sales do offset part of our management costs.
- MDC has a lot of land in a few counties like Shannon County, but timber harvest only affects a small portion of any MDC holding in any given year. Dollars go into the Conservation Commission's fund, and do not necessarily go directly back to the county of origin. This is appropriate because the broad Conservation program benefits the county in many ways. We make some payment – either in-lieu-of-tax or forest cropland payment – to local government for every acre we own. We pay staff who do many things of local value – help private landowners manage their land, trees, wildlife and wildfire for example. Well managed forests provide returns to the county in more and better hunting and fishing, and more people are drawn to the area leading to activities that otherwise benefit the economy.
- Forestry doesn't have a stand-alone plan, but works within the framework of a departmental strategic plan and operational forest management guidelines. Harvest issues are complex, and we harvest different sizes and in different ways depending on site, stand health, habitat needs, species, and other factors. Most harvest is done by contract, and contracts are carefully written and monitored to assure minimal damage to site and trees not marked for sale, and penalties if these requirements are not followed.
- Oak decline is possibly our biggest forest issue. If a land manager delays harvest of oak decline areas until declining trees die, stumps do not sprout and regenerate a new forest as they do if cut while still living. MDC is working to prioritize areas of heavy decline, and prioritize stands within compartments to complete harvest while most of an affected stand lives.
- MDC uses clearcuts to regenerate oak species, because young oaks thrive only in full sunlight. Our largest clearcuts are in the 12-15 acre range. In Missouri, most clearcut

stands naturally regenerate from stump sprouts, or small seedlings growing on the forest floor. Occasionally seeding or seedling planting is necessary. We also do intermediate cuts to thin stands, and selective cuts in some situations. Two goals of every harvest are to perpetuate a healthy forest and maximize its wildlife benefits. Harvest of full grown oak trees normally waits for 80-100 years.

- Some private lands have been hit hard by chip mill harvests, but chip-cutting on large scale has largely stopped. However, people should not forget that chips can provide a valuable market for small diameter material, helping landowners avoid conversion of healthy forest to less environment-friendly uses.
- Bad forestry practices yield bad results, but sound practices can actually improve our forests. We do need to do a better job educating people about forest management: done right, it is a boon to our economy; done wrong, it is a nuisance to our environment. A lot of private timber land is not professionally managed, and bad practices sometimes color public opinions about state lands.
- Even though most people still think forested land is shrinking, the fact is Missouri forest land has increased in the last two decades. Harvests on state lands have produced a much more diverse and wildlife-friendly forest than would occurred otherwise. People need to understand that tree harvest can maintain rather than end the forest.

Conservation Commission, Sales Tax and General Operations

The public continues to be interested in many broad issues of agency management and policy, and is especially attentive to issues concerning funding, land acquisition and the Conservation Commission.

The Conservation Commission was established in 1936, and is structured the same today as then: four members, two from each party but no geographical segmentation, and six year terms. Commissioners serve without pay. Governor Blunt will appoint his first Conservation Commissioner in July of 2005 when Commissioner Gorman's term ends.

Today, there are two men and two women Commissioners; two from urban and two from rural areas. Commissioners have been farmers, tree farmers, attorneys, business people, and most have conscientiously avoided parochial thinking, putting the best interest of the resources and the whole state above those of their region or interest.

In 1976, voters approved an initiative, proposed by a group of citizens, for a 1/8th of one percent sales tax dedicated to conservation and a program known as *Design for Conservation*. *Design for Conservation* proposed many things, but buying land, building nature centers and an expanded program for non-game species were basic plan components. Such long term investments made little sense to those making the proposal, unless the funds were provided to maintain for many years hence. The amendment creating the tax included no "sunset clause" because the intent was for conservation efforts to continue.

Conservation pays its way in Missouri, with studies showing that forest, fish and wildlife activities annually generate \$7 billion in economic activity. That activity generates general revenue funds to the rest of the state budget comparable to MDC budget (Missouri's "General Revenue" is funded by a 4% sales tax on most goods and services, so it's worth noting that 4% of \$7 billion is \$280 million, far more than MDC's annual budget). Conservation funds total a very small part of the state's financial picture. One could combine MDC's budget with the budgets of two other small agencies (Agriculture and Insurance) and still make up less than 1% of the state budget.

What MDC Heard . . . Conservation Commission, Sales Tax and General Operations

Commissioners

- A Harrisonville man recalled that Governor-elect Blunt has proposed increasing the number of commissioners and asked if the Director or Department had a position on that proposal. [The Director explained that the Department had no position on that, and that the idea had not come up in early discussions with the Governor's transition liaison. He noted that the present system has been in place for 68 years with four commissioners serving at-large, and the system has worked fairly well.] (KC)

- Does the Governor actually appoint the Conservation Commissioners? Participant would like to see the state divided into four regions with one Commissioner from each, and one “timber person.” It is disappointing not to see more people here. Conservation will need to come back to such a meeting and say “we listened” and “here is what we will do about it.” (OZ)
- A participant who belongs to Ducks Unlimited reported being at a lot of meetings over the years, saying that the state’s conservation department and system has stood the test of time pretty well. He talked about Conservation Commissioner Lowell Mohler, who “has farm land in Holt County and is fully qualified to represent this region.” He said Mohler had been a leader in Ducks Unlimited for decades and is an avid hunter; and added that Commissioner Herzog was like that, too. (NW)

Future of the Sales Tax

- Protect the 1/8 of 1% sales tax from threats. Get out and talk to elected officials to make sure sales tax stays in place. Without the tax many MDC programs will not remain intact. (SE)
- People interested in conservation should get involved with legislature: the 1/8 of 1 percent is challenged every year, and some senators and representatives are trying to combine MDC and DNR. That is alarming, and people need to get together and lobby: don’t put a sunset on 1/8% sales tax; don’t combine MDC & Parks with reduced overall funding. (SL)
- Participant takes pride in Missouri’s commitment to the conservation sales tax and supported the Design for Conservation initiative and sales tax in 1976. His reasons included belief in the need for more land for many uses, especially bird watching and hiking. He says MDC needs to respond to questions raised by recent Kansas City Star articles because the public expects MDC to be accountable. If the money is not being used wisely, the public is in a position to change that system. (SL)
- A friend of former MDC Directors Gale & Noren pushed petitions for conservation twice, but lately hasn’t met many people who know what the Design for Conservation program really was. “Design” was to keep politics out. Springfield’s WOW Museum, he said, is a “disaster” today because it had politics in it from the start – a sharp contrast to the Springfield Nature Center, which has been a great success. (SW)
- Protect the 1/8 of 1% sales tax from threats. People should get out and talk to elected officials to make sure the sales tax stays in place. Without the tax many MDC programs will not remain intact. (SE)
- Participant who campaigned for the 1/8% sales tax was emphatic that the dollars should continue to go to MDC. He’s heard a concern expressed that MDC is receiving better funding than schools, but is adamantly opposed to reallocation of MDC dollars to schools or anything else. (KC)
- The Missouri Prairie Foundation is designing a website to monitor legislative activity, and protecting the 1/8% Conservation Sales Tax is one goal of that project. (KC)
- Remember to service both the public and our resources. Need to have the Conservation Federation of Missouri well organized politically to fight the Missouri Farm Bureau’s and Claire McCaskill’s opposition to the 1/8% sales tax for conservation. (SW, written)
- MDNR has sunset on its 1/10th percent parks & soils tax. Why is the Conservation Commission against sunset on its tax? (NW)

- Friends in states where the legislature sets the rules tell me game management is “a joke” so it is important to keep politics out of Missouri Conservation.

Media Criticism

- Kansas City Star articles: Should we expect a report or rebuttal from MDC? (NE)
- Kansas City Star is just anti-gun, and that alone explains recent criticism of MDC. (NE)
- Participant described as “trivial” the critique of MDC for providing food at meetings, reported in a recent KC Star article. It is imperative that the department remain accountable, but this example is pretty scant reason for concern. (KC)
- A hunter education instructor thinks the KC media has “painted a target on the department’s backside.” He wants to clarify a recent TV report expressing outrage that a hunting permit was sold to convicted felon prohibited from possessing firearms. With a little research, a reporter should have discovered that there was nothing illegal in buying or selling the permit and that it might have been required under the Wildlife Code, where a firearms permit is necessary for some archery hunting (a weapon felons can possess). (KC)
- There is one writer in SW Missouri who is highly critical of past abuses by the Conservation Department. What merit is there in his reports? (SW)

Buy more land?

- Buy up all the land you can. (SL)
- A letter sent one of the Conservation Commissioners by a forum participant emphasized one point: keep buying land. (SL)
- Don’t give into pressure to sell land. (SL)
- Buy more areas where rare plants & animals prosper. (SL)
- MDC should buy more land – bird, hike, etc. (SW)
- Advocate buying ground, but don’t just put up a sign and leave it. Conservation easements should be used more if MDC will be custodian of easement. (SW)
- Support the Audubon Society’s initiative for important bird conservation areas. (SL)
- In a few years, people will be asking why we didn’t buy more land. (SW)
- MDC is buying too much land in our district (Shannon County) and that it hurts the tax base. My real estate tax is less than half of my county tax, so when you replace people it cuts revenue from personal property taxes. Local taxes continue to rise as a result. (OZ, written)
- Participant on the Shannon County school board thinks MDC’s payments in-lieu-of-taxes for the 30% of the County MDC owns is too small, and that hurts the schools. Moreover, when land becomes public, it no longer has people living there and paying personal property taxes and sending kids to school. Fewer kids mean less state and federal school aid, and all these things together make public land ownership a big concern. (OZ)
- As MDC spending for land acquisition goes down, assistance to private land owners must go up. (SL)
- The conservation department, to participant’s knowledge, is doing a good job in acquiring land to open to the public. I am very pleased to see this due to decreasing access to private land. If anything I would like to see more land purchased for public hunting and fishing. (SW, written)
- Protect private landowners; don’t purchase land you cannot maintain or supervise; provide fencing as promised to private landowners; put up signs & provide staff to keep hunters off private land; don’t extend hunting seasons (SW, written)

Continuation: What MDC Heard...Conservation Commission, Sales Tax & General Operations
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- 7% of land in public ownership is not excessive, and there's no justification to quit buying land. (SL)

Compliments

Almost to the person, speakers expressed appreciation in some way for the opportunity to speak. In addition, there were many compliments not recorded here, but some shed light on the things that forum participants value:

- Participant chose to move to Missouri in 1974 partly because conservation is so good here. (CE)
- I've never met a conservation employee who wasn't courteous and helpful. (CE)
- MDC staff demonstrates exemplary professionalism and concern for the resources. Listening to public is important, but leaders should also listen carefully to what the professional staff says. (CE)
- Praised MDC – far ahead of any other state in the country. (CE)
- Participant is very supportive of the Department and has worked with a lot of Department staff including agents and forestry staff, offering constructive criticism on issues. (SE)
- Programs at the Springfield Conservation Nature Center and the Andy Dalton Range at Bois D'Arc Conservation Area were commended. (SW)
- MDC staff have good information and are generous with their time.
- Good relations between MDC and the City of Columbia partly reflect one MDC employee's membership on city council. The Department should continue to allow MDC staff to serve in community government and cooperator organizations without adverse employment consequences. (CE)
- These forums are a good thing. (OZ)
- Generally feel MDC is doing a pretty good job managing the resources (OZ, written)

Conservation Areas

- MDC should pay more attention to the Katy Trail, managed by DNR. Participant has taken several scout troops on the trail and noted a lack of camping opportunities. He would like to see a partnership between DNR and MDC to develop about 20 small (1 acre) camping areas providing primitive camping for groups and spaced along the trail, using conservation areas where possible. (SL)
- Millstream Gardens adjoins the National Forest [Silver Mines] which charges many fees. We appreciate not having to pay to park, camp, etc. at the MDC areas. (SL)
- Many areas reflect efforts to restore native plants, which form the basis for invertebrates and on up the food chain. MDC should focus more on this, especially on new areas such as sandstone areas. (SL)
- The Resource Science office on the University of Missouri campus has played an important role in the Columbia community and University for decades. (CE)
- Participant commends the Commission's Private Lands initiative, saying cost share for farmers is a great approach. (SW)
- Compliments were given to MDC on landscape scale conservation, especially grasslands. There was a suggestion to initiate, in cooperation with the landowners, a process to set goals and make plans to meet growing Missouri problems with invasive species. Special mention was made of teasel and sericea lespedeza, and the damage invasive species could cause on the few remaining native grasslands.

Continuation: What MDC Heard...Conservation Commission, Sales Tax & General Operations
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Miscellaneous

- Where are the mountain lions coming from, and how do we deal with them? (NE)
- Is MDC's new class of agents to replace agents who are retiring/leaving or adding more agents in the field? More agents are needed in some counties. There is one agent in Bollinger County to cover 700 plus square miles or more. (SE)
- As a taxpayer, participant would like to know how much is spent on paper supplies for hunting and fishing permits each year. What is the cost, how many permits sold and what does it cost taxpayers to print the permits? (SE)
- Compliments were given on landscape-scale conservation efforts, especially grasslands. The Department should aggressively pursue assistance to landowners on the few remaining native grasslands, and address the growing problem with invasive species – teasle, sericea. (KC)
- Participant likes the idea of trophy trout areas, but thinks otters are having field day with trout and other game species. Before any more new species are scheduled for restoration, the Department should have public meetings. Otter damage today is bad enough that there should be a bounty on them. (OZ)
- Students at Northwest Missouri State are eager for internship possibilities in Conservation. What does the Department have to offer? (NW)
- I have seen a few of your CA's. I think you do GREAT JOB: I once thought it cost an arm & a leg to hunt & fish here, but after I got to see what the Dept. of Conservation was doing with "my money" I didn't care to give it any more. Thanks! (SW, written)
- MDC's job is to manage the property it has, but it is imperative to remember that the taxpayers own it. Extra dollars should be spent in communities and to help landowners. (KC)
- Accountability is important, and in participant's experience, MDC has been accountable. The people must be involved, however, and in many cases the department can be no better than the people are. (KC)
- A state senator noted that Conservation funding seems to be in more jeopardy than ever before, with the issues associated with multiple demands (public/private lands, streams, quality v. quantity) driving concern. Continued funding is the key to whether Missouri goes backward or forward in the arena of conservation and fish and wildlife management. What is the best way to conserve what is important? MDC help in James River basin has been valuable, as has the new private lands division and constant efforts to reduce conflict between landowners and resource users. Education is the issue most critically important. (SW)
- Does Conservation Sales Tax money collected here in St. Charles County stay in St. Charles? (SL)
- The general direction of the country's interest in wildlife is shifting to the "non-consumptive" side. USFWS survey says non-consumptive outdoorsmen outnumber the consumptive users. All Missourians pay the conservation sales tax. (NW)
- We need to keep the federal agencies out of Missouri, especially the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Participant had attended a public meeting about Monitor Creek watershed from which he concluded that BLM wants to take property rights "to where a landowner can't do anything but plant grass. Endangered species work amounts to a land grab," evidenced by a New Mexico case involving BLM. (NE)

What MDC Said . . . Conservation Commission, Sales Tax and General Operations

- The Department respects the special “no sunset” provision, and works twice as hard because of it to keep in touch with the public. Surveys tell us that our approval rating is high. We believe we could win a vote to keep the tax in place, but that effort would surely divert energy from conservation work that is clearly in demand. “Tax sunset” is a term popular with some people, but they are often selective in which funds they want it applied to. If there should be a sunset on conservation funds, shouldn’t there also be a sunset on dedicated funds for transportation, education or the income and sales taxes that support general revenue? “No sunset” in some cases is only “window dressing” for the real objectives of minority groups whose real purpose is to cut the conservation programs that most Missourians support and most of the nation envies.
- After 9 months of digging, Kansas City Star reporters ran with a series of articles that reported very little of the sorts of problems they appeared to be seeking. The articles don’t criticize MDC for fraud, malfeasance, etc., but do critique projects that may not have worked out as intended, all with the advantage of hindsight. The Department ought to feel complimented by the critiques of “overachieving”, a rare charge against government agencies that the Star evidently found noteworthy. We also take heart that most of the criticism was founded on innuendo and half truth, a clear indication that real evidence was not found to support their critical views.
- MDC private land programs are voluntary. If you don’t want assistance and don’t like the rules, you don’t have to participate in any MDC program. MDC works with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to implement the new federal farm bill, which is also voluntary – people only have to adhere to the rules if they choose to participate in the programs and take the payments.
- Legislators asked if MDC is paying a fair amount to counties in-lieu-of-taxes, and the matter has been studied. The studies found that in some counties, and Shannon is among these, the Conservation Department pays more than landowners with comparable land. A new system was developed which grades lands into classes and sets a rate on each based on agriculture land values. Counties will now get the higher of two amounts: the figure MDC has been paying (tax at time of acquisition) or the figure generated by the new system.
- Mountain lions may come to Missouri from other states or from captive animals illegally released here. We are not sure if any are breeding in the wild, but do get frequent reports of sightings. We will investigate reports seriously if there is physical evidence like tracks, hair, or carcass. There is no season on mountain lions, however the Wildlife Code of Missouri allows taking them if they are attacking or killing livestock or domestic animals, or attacking human beings. The kill must be reported immediately to an agent of the Department and the carcass surrendered within twenty-four (24) hours.
- MDC’s agent class will not increase the workforce, but will fill vacant positions. While more agents would be good to have, other jobs are important, too. Workers in other jobs have different training than agents, but Private Lands Services staff, resource scientists, education consultants, and others are important to get the work of MDC completed. They help with many of the services people think of agents as providing.
- Otter restoration was publicly discussed before it happened, and implemented using the best information biologists had at the time. Unfortunately, some of that information was wrong, and populations grew faster causing more unpredicted damage. Otters have

Continuation: What MDC Said...Conservation Commission, Sales Tax & General Operations

significantly impacted some small headwater streams, but research tells us things are getting better. Liberalized trapping rules and a strong market for otter fur are making a difference.

- We can see some signs that damaged fisheries are coming back. Public meetings would be in order if new restorations of species were contemplated today.
- The Conservation Department is conscientious about private property rights, and recognizes the importance of protecting them. MDC has never used and is committed to never using eminent domain to acquire property. While we are a major land-owner, the Department owns less than 1.7% of Missouri's 45 million acres, with most of that ownership south of the Missouri River. MDC pays local governments in-lieu-of-taxes and levee and drainage taxes on every acre we own, over \$1 million annually. We are now working to raise those payments in an equitable way, paying the higher of taxes at time of acquisition or comparable agricultural land tax rate.
- MDC has succeeded because of steady funding; but some raise the legitimate question whether it has too much money today. In dollars adjusted for inflation, growth has been slight since 1976. As the state has struggled with a tight budget, so has MDC, making many cuts to staff and programs in order to live within our income. There is a great deal of oversight of the Department's budget. It starts with oversight by the Conservation Commission, but in the last 5 years 28 different audits have reviewed all or part of the MDC programs. The US Fish and Wildlife Service, which provides many dollars to Missouri projects, also audited MDC. No audit has found fraud, misuse of funds or dishonesty.

Region Specific Input

Each Regional Coordination Team organized the local forum and set the agenda to meet local needs. In all cases, preliminary remarks were made by the Director and some brief presentation by regional staff preceded the public input.

The preceding eleven sections of this summary were topical in nature and gathered comments from around the state into a single section. Many comments did not fit well with any of the previous topics or were region-specific. They are equally important and are reported in the following eight sections.

A few MDC comments are recorded here, but many local items were addressed directly between staff and participants during breaks and after the forum formally concluded.

Central Regional Forum

September 21, 2004

UMC Monsanto Life Sciences Building
Columbia, MO



At least eighteen citizens participated, as did Department staff from the central region and the Jefferson City central office. Tom Strother, Protection Division Regional Supervisor, moderated the meeting. Director John Hoskins made welcoming and closing remarks.

Jeff Cockerham, Outreach and Education Regional Supervisor, then highlighted some key efforts and concerns in MDC's Central Region, including Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), new antler point restrictions, winter trout fishing, forestry grants, area vandalism, Share-the-Harvest, and quail initiatives. He reported Department interest in receiving input about the desirability of allowing all-day spring turkey hunting.

Mr. Strother posed the following two questions and asked participants to help answer them:

- 1) What kinds of public use facilities are most important to provide and maintain on conservation areas?
- 2) What services are you most interested in receiving from the Conservation Department in the Central Region?

What MDC Heard . . . Central Region

A total of twenty six comments were noted, most of which are reported in issue sections of this report. The following items relate to the Central Region, and have or will be pursued at the regional staff level:

- Eagle Bluffs and other Big Muddy Areas should be managed for more shallow water in the fall to draw shorebirds and waders before the waterfowl hunting season.
- Good relations between MDC & Columbia are partly due to Jim Loveless being on the Columbia city council. Continue to allow MDC staff to take opportunities to serve in community government and cooperator organizations without adverse employment consequences.
- Listening to the public is important, but department leaders should also listen carefully to what staff says. MDC staff demonstrates exemplary professionalism and concern for the resources.
- Having the Resource Science office on campus has played an important role in the Columbia community and university for decades.
- South Farm & Rocky Forks areas have good parking and restrooms. Those facilities do require maintenance, but MDC should not get frustrated by vandalism. It should provide parking/restrooms in more places.
- Whetstone Creek CA has been a good area to visit, but less so now because trails are not mowed enough for good hiking.
- Rudolf Bennitt area shows some evidence of horse damage. If you allow that sort of thing, why not also allow people to use ATVs to bring out deer? The road into the bottoms has been closed, so it would help to not have to drag deer up the hill to parking areas.

Continuation: What MDC Heard...Central Region

- Dikes in the Missouri River seem to be damaged and falling apart. Why?
- Resident living on Hominy Branch has major beaver damage, with no mature trees left except sycamores.

What MDC Said . . . Central Region

- Dikes and structures in the Missouri River are built and maintained by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). The Corps regularly maintains many structures, but some no longer needed by the navigation project are allowed to degrade. MDC's involvement is limited to working with the Corps to develop needed and varied river habitats as these structures are maintained or removed from the system.
- MDC assists those with wildlife damage problems in many ways, including helping those with damage make connections with hunters and trappers who may be able to help.

Northeast Regional Forum

October 4, 2004

Macon High School Cafeteria
Macon, MO



At least twenty-four citizens participated, as did Department staff from the Northeast Region and the Jefferson City central office. Brian Todd of MDC's Fisheries Division moderated the meeting. Director John Hoskins made welcoming and closing remarks.

Mr. Todd introduced Jeff Cockerham of MDC's Outreach and Education Division, who highlighted some key efforts and concerns in the Northeast Region, including Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), new antler point restrictions, the new regional office under construction, forestry grants, area vandalism, Share-the-Harvest, and quail initiatives. He reported Department interest in receiving input about the desirability of allowing all-day spring turkey hunting.

Director Hoskins noted that Macon was home to Frank Briggs who served as Conservation Commissioner from 1947 to 1961. He also commended the region for its record-breaking contribution to the Share-the-Harvest program in 2003, top donor region in the state.

The forum was open to public questions and comments. Bill Bergh, Private Land Services Division, facilitated the exchange. Some responses were made at time of query, others were held for the Director to address before his closing remarks.

What MDC Heard . . . Northeast Region

A total of twenty comments were noted, most of which are reported in issue sections of this report. The following items relate to the Northeast Region, and have or will be pursued at the regional staff level:

- Will there be a new lake near Milan?
- Is there a chance to open an archery season around Long Branch Lake?
- We need to keep the federal agencies out of Missouri, especially the Bureau of Land Management. Participant also attended a public meeting about Moniteau Creek watershed, concluding that the BLM wants to take private property rights, to where a landowner "can't do anything but plant grass."
- Wal-Mart sales staff often does not know what to do with permit sales.

Written comments to the above questions received from meeting participants:

- What kinds of public use facilities are most important to provide and maintain on conservation areas?
 - Boat ramps, information centers and maps of said areas
 - Hunting & fishing
 - Boat launches, camping, river access
 - Shooting ranges

Continuation: What MDC Heard...Northeast Region

- What service are you most interested in receiving from the Conservation Department in the Northeast Region?
 - Private land services
 - Quail Academy
 - Quail improvement
 - Habitat improvement programs, youth oriented services

What MDC Said . . . Northeast Region

- The City of Milan wants a larger water supply for industrial reasons, and has formed a Water Commission to build a 2,300 acre reservoir Northeast of Milan. They must acquire the land prior to construction. Construction is to be a project of the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Northeast Missouri Wholesale Water Commission, not the Army Corps of Engineers. MDC cannot be involved in constructing the lake, but if built, has committed to provide fishery management and construction of supporting boat ramps and parking areas through the CAP program, pending Conservation Commission review and approval.
- MDC understands that DNR is investigating browse damage at Long Branch State Park. If DNR concludes that deer populations need to be reduced, MDC will work with them to find ways to do so. This would likely involve some limited hunting such as a special hunt or youth hunt.
- The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has a PL566 (public law) project in Howard County involving Moniteau Creek watershed. MDC does not control what the Bureau of Land Management or any federal agency does in Missouri. MDC will work closely with NRCS to implement the new federal farm bill, however please note that its provisions, like all MDC private land programs, are voluntary: landowners only become subject to property restrictions if they choose to participate in the program and take federal payments.
- MDC Protection staff has a training session scheduled with the local Wal-Mart staff to help further educate them on the permit system.
- Long Branch Lake has a turbidity problem. The situation is better than it has been, however there is still very little natural recruitment – the lowest of 50 lakes in the NE Region. Catch rates for largemouth bass are similar to earlier according to electro-fishing surveys, so it would be difficult to conclude that the fishery is impacted. Input has been about evenly divided as far as whether or not to increase striped stocking.

Southeast Regional Forum

October 14, 2004
Clinton Building
Sikeston, MO



At least forty-two citizens participated, as did Department staff from the Southeast Region and the Jefferson City central office. Ken West of MDC's Protection Division moderated the meeting. Director John Hoskins made welcoming and closing remarks. He introduced Conservation Commissioner Cynthia Metcalfe and recognized Representative Peter Meyers, former Conservation Commissioner.

What MDC Heard . . . Southeast Region

A total of fifty comments were noted, most of which are reported in issue sections of this report. The following items relate to the Southeast Region, and have or will be pursued at the regional staff level:

- Duck Creek has trouble with the water, and pool 1 now very low. Can wells and pumps be used to correct this, as they are at Otter Slough?
- Plant more crops again at Duck Creek: replacing grain with grass was a mistake. There were always lots of geese at Duck Creek when crops were planted by permittee farmers, but the population has now decreased.
- A farm owner ¼ mile from the new shooting range at Castor River CA expressed displeasure that he was never contacted by MDC about the range development before construction started. He feels the range should not be there for several reasons:
 1. The remote area is hard to access (public, emergency rescue, and law enforcement). A better location would be on Hwy 34 or in the Bootheel.
 2. Deer and turkey may get used to the activity around the range, but it may hinder the deer/turkey numbers around the range.
 3. Rumors say that an elected official pushed the construction of the shooting range through the system because he wanted to be noted for doing something for Bollinger County.
 4. Couldn't a better location been found somewhere in the middle of the 8,000 acres of land rather than right on the edge of the boundary line?
- Are there any plans to do anything different on the Coon Island CA with moist soils, etc?
- SE Missouri is "treated like a stepchild" in the way seasons come about. Southern areas of Missouri deserve better season dates. Extending deer and turkey seasons on the front end does not help here. The opening dates for ducks and quail are way too early for us.
- Partnership with MDC on a youth conservation corps (YCC) this year was a great experience. Sand Prairie Project in Scott County allowed youths to perform many jobs and interact with MDC staff on jobs this past summer. Participant asks MDC to continue the work with the YCC and match funding by the Workforce Investment Board. That would help youth, our future voters, to get involved with MDC and learn about the mission of MDC and its programs. This is also a good recruitment to future outdoor recreation.
- Is MDC's new class of agents for replacements or is it adding more agents in the field? More agents are needed in some counties. There is one agent in Bollinger County to cover 700 plus square miles or more.

What MDC Said . . . Southeast Region

- Director Hoskins voiced great concern about hearing that a landowner adjacent to Castor River CA shooting range was not contacted. MDC's practice is to contact all nearby neighbors to any proposed range site. If this was not done, MDC made a mistake. On the other hand, as important as ranges are, it is very difficult to find places for them that meet safety requirements and are acceptable to neighbors. Especially in rural and lightly populated areas, it has become very difficult to develop range facilities.
- The current agent class will replace retirees and vacancies, but not increase the workforce. Staff growth has not been an option, and the positions we have must meet needs for agents, private land specialists, resource scientists, education consultants, etc.
- Coon Island CA has increasingly been affected by Black River flooding, compromising our best plans for habitat management on the area.

St. Louis Regional Forum

Monday, October 18, 2004
St. Louis Regional Office
St. Charles, MO



At least forty-five citizens participated, as did Department staff from the St. Louis Region and the Jefferson City central office. Perry Eckhardt, of the Private Land Services Division, moderated the meeting and thanked the audience for attending in the face of competing events (Cardinal play-offs, a Rams game, gubernatorial debates). Director John Hoskins, made welcoming and closing remarks. Rep. George Engelbach from Jefferson County and Conservation Commissioner Cynthia Metcalfe were in attendance.

What MDC Heard . . . St. Louis Region

A total of forty-six comments were noted, most of which are reported in issue sections of this report. The following items relate to the St. Louis Region, mostly about the Busch Memorial Conservation Area. They have been or will be pursued at the regional staff level:

Miscellaneous Issues:

- Support was voiced for Big River as a trophy fishery area.
- The Department should buy more land in Jefferson County, and provide a facility there similar to this Busch Area office. Needs include public fishing lakes and trail development, walking and riding both.
- Dams along the Big River need work, especially as they impound pools that make boat ramps usable. If dams give way, the department and public will lose use of existing boat ramps at Morse Mill and House Springs.
- Development should not continue in the floodplains.

Busch Area Office Hours:

- Busch CA offices should be open on weekends. It would be better to close the office a couple of week days and keep it open on weekends.
- Dislikes weekend closure of Busch CA office. People and groups need to be able to use the training facilities on weekends.

Horses:

- Participant likes the convenience of the Busch area, and wants National Field Trials to be held there. Keep on schedule to have the fields ready and follow through on promises already made.
- St. Charles County has lost two areas for trail riding. Could MDC open a specific area for trail rides?
- Area user since age of 16 would like to see things going on that "I don't see happening." Is there an overall plan for Busch Wildlife Area? For fields? For horse riding?
- Participant and wife moved to the New Melle area to ride horses, and other horse people have been moving from St. Louis, too. Development is now limiting their riding options, and people may have to move on. MDC should help develop connector trails among riding areas, and consider developing peripheral trails around Busch and Weldon Spring.

Continuation: What MDC Heard...St. Louis Region

Lakes on Busch Area:

- Construction on lakes (e.g., Lake 11 at Busch WA) has involved big rocks for stabilization on the lake points. This practice is extremely dangerous for the dogs – the rocks cut their pads. Smaller stone would make the lakes more dog and people friendly. This problem has effectively removed some renovated lakes from use for dog training and trials.
- Other concerns about Lake 11 renovation were also expressed: riprap is good fish habitat and the big blocks used in construction puts fish closer to kids.
- The Busch Area should have a lake primarily dedicated to dog training.
- Prairie Lake is losing water, so what are plans to remedy that? [MDC Comment: We have conducted engineering studies to determine cause; it will remain a lake and be restored as funds are available.]

Busch Area Management Concerns:

- Poaching is a big problem at Busch/Weldon Springs conservation areas.
- The archery range on Busch is getting torn up – drinking and shooting broad-heads are practices contributing to this.
- When it is very dry on Busch CA the roads are very dusty and when it rains it is very messy. When it is dusty it is dangerous to drive behind others. Could MDC use something besides a limestone base?
- Busch Area nature trails are enjoyable, and the work by staff/volunteers to get rid of bush honeysuckle is appreciated. Continue bringing back the biodiversity.
- Opportunities provided at Busch CA are appreciated, especially the butterfly garden across from parking lot, and about 50 nature walks each year. Both are projects of Missouri Native Plant Society/Webster Grove Nature Society.
- Maintain the Outdoor Classroom and trail at the Busch Area, developed by Francis Howell students a few years ago. Would like to see a long and short grass prairie demonstration area and native landscaping model area. Do something to BWA entrance to make it prettier, coneflowers, pine tree, etc.
- Area around Busch CA is being developed, and seems on the way to becoming “the next Wildwood or Town and Country” as far as deer are concerned. Development takes away habitat for deer and other animals. MDC needs to be active as an advisor, and to influence DNR on where development happens.
- Participant dislikes the factories in Missouri Research Park near Weldon Springs. He raised three sons to hunt and fish in this area, but finds that new developments have chased off the deer & turkey.
- Concerns were expressed that MDC might allow privatization of parts of the Busch and Weldon Spring wildlife areas. Neighbors are concerned that someone will buy a lot of conservation land somewhere else and try to trade it to the Commission for Prairie Lake. Fear is driven by a proposal four years ago, pushed by the governor’s office, for a trade to the University. It did not happen, but the proposal made many wary.

What MDC Said . . . St. Louis Region

- The last three items were addressed by Commissioner Cynthia Metcalfe, who stated that developers periodically approach the Department wanting to buy or use Conservation lands. Ms. Metcalfe is one of four Commissioners who would have to approve any transfer. She cannot imagine that the Commission would ever acquiesce to a deal compromising the Busch or Weldon Spring CAs. However, Commission resolve needs popular support, thus people should be vocal about these issues and tell their elected officials, especially state senators, what they want.
- Public meetings would be held prior to any decision to dispose of parts of Busch or Weldon Spring CAs to private interests. When the Highway Department asked for part of the Busch Area to improve highway 40, the Conservation Commission, in the interest of public safety, agreed. However, the Commission insisted that MoDOT pay for the land and used the money to buy more land. In general, it is the responsibility of the Commission and the Department to make such deals only when they are good for conservation.
- The number one problem for fisheries in SL Region is storm water run-off. MDC works to educate the public and municipalities. However, regulation is the job of DNR and local zoning commissions, and MDC can only provide knowledge and advice to address this problem.

Southwest Regional Forum

October 26, 2004
Bass Pro - White River Room
Springfield, MO



At least sixty-one citizens participated, as did Department staff from the Southwest Region and the Jefferson City central office. Tim Russell of MDC's Wildlife Division moderated the meeting. Director John Hoskins made welcoming and closing remarks. Senator Doyle Childers and Rep. Dennis Wood were in attendance.

Mr. Russell posed the following two questions and asked participants to help answer them:

- 1) What kinds of public use facilities are most important to provide and maintain on conservation areas?
- 2) Which resource issue do you feel is most important in Southwest Missouri? What are your thoughts on how MDC is addressing this issue?

Both questions generated extensive comments, both oral and written, reported in appropriate sections of this report.

What MDC Heard . . . Southwest Region

Thirty-one people offered oral comments and twenty-eight forms with written comments were received. All are noted, mostly in issue sections of this report. The following items relate to the Southwest Region, and have or will be pursued at the regional staff level:

- Wendell Jeffrey has done tremendous work with seniors on fishing at Bois D'Arc CA. Keep up that work, and work with the Prairie Foundation and Nature Conservancy.
- Hickory County is fortunate to have several Conservation Areas, and the county government is partnering with MDC on Niangua Crossing and Mule Shoe projects – bridges to help conserve the snail darter. County leaders appreciate MDC's road rock program, and meet yearly with Conservation Agents.
- Department involvement with the James River Partnership is good. Local leaders have met with DNR's Director Mahfood, and would like to meet with MDC's Director Hoskins about further MDC involvement in studying the James River watershed.
- Water Quality is a high priority in this area, as is urbanization in Springfield, Branson and Joplin areas. Growth is fueled by people moving in, but how do we keep development in check?
- The door is open a crack on stopping a 2000-acre subdivision called Terrell Creek, adjacent to participant's home and to Wilson's Creek National Battlefield. Is it possible for MDC to buy this tract? Continued land acquisition is very important, and MDC should look, not just 20, but 200 years ahead. This is especially true in areas like Southwest Missouri where rapid development substantially changes a long undeveloped landscape.
- A hunter & outdoorsman who hunts deer at Shawnee Trail CA and Bushwhacker Lake believes that use of cattle there hurt deer even if they in some way benefit quail. He does not want to see cattle back in the area, and believes management should favor the many area hunters over the one cattle farmer this practice benefits.
- Hats off to staff at Dalton Range for planning a disabled hunt this fall.

Continuation: What MDC Heard...Southwest Region

- Provide a viewing blind for waterfowl at Stockton-Aldrich. (written)
- Squirrel & armadillo populations need some type of control. (written)
- We need a manned shooting range at Crowder CA, not an unmanned range. (written)
- We need the firing range near Neosho, now under way. Consolidate existing forestry office, personnel and equipment with the new firing range. Real estate can be put up for sale and the money used by the Department. Southwest Missouri is undergoing an unheard of growth of people, Newton and McDonald Counties especially. (written)
- Andy Dalton range is a first class facility. I know money is limited but a 200 yard range would be nice. I hope you can return to having the evening hours next summer. (written)
- Tremendous improvements have occurred at the Andy Dalton Shooting Range under Mike's leadership. (written)
- Why log areas like Lead mine CA? What happens to the wildlife there, pushed to private land that the public can't use? Is logging a benefit to that CA or is it just a financial gain at the expense of the environment? Educate the surrounding area about why, how, when, etc. logging will be done. We are apprehensive about how the area will look like after logging. (written)

The Southwest Regional Coordination Team posed the question: Which resource issue do you feel is most important in Southwest Missouri? The following list summarizes written responses handed in. When a comment was offered to the second part of the question (What are your thoughts on how MDC is addressing this issue?), it is included in the appropriate report section:

- Habitat for quail/doves/songbirds, deer & turkey
- More conservation areas with horse trails
- Water quality and urbanizing of rural areas
- Smallmouth/goggle-eye protection ins streams of the Ozarks
- Water quality
- Quail, quail and more quail
- Police the waterways, especially in McDonald Co.
- Water quality
- Quail restoration
- Fire as a management tool – natural timing is artificial
- Water quality needs to be looked at. There are no longer good deep swimming areas like there used to be 10 years ago
- Quail and how to improve their habitat
- Water quality is very important – concerned about safety & supply of well water
- Waterways and water quality, stringent regulation on how close to the water people can build homes
- The land itself
- Water quality and conservation, especially as urban sprawl increases & farms are split into small acreages for homes
- Game control (hunting), stop poaching - Increase quail population - protect/increase prairie chicken populations
- Water quality – without it, all the work or your Fisheries Department will be for naught
- Wildlife population & habitat control
- Forestry
- Fishing at Table Rock Lake is bad, especially for novices and bank-anglers
- The lakes!

What MDC Said . . . Southwest Region

- It is seldom an option for MDC to consider acquisition of land to prevent development and protect against urban growth – this sort of land is way too expensive. There will always be growth, and that is not necessarily a bad thing. MDC's role is to provide technical help on ways to develop in the least harmful way, but it is up to citizens to regulate growth at the local level if they wish. Easements may be an approach, and the Federal Farmland Protection Act may offer useful tools.
- Grazing is used in many states to maintain habitats, and this has been tried at Shawnee Trail. That area is involved with a pilot project to see if prairie management can improve with cattle. The goal is not just to benefit quail, but to help many prairie species, especially the state endangered Greater Prairie Chicken. We "flash graze" areas to replicate what bison did, attempting to create a mosaic on the prairie and more diversity in the habitat. This is done to benefit wildlife. Although farmers who provide the grazing cattle may benefit, too, they do so only as a result of a bidding process.

Kansas City Regional Forum

Monday, December 2, 2004
Burr Oak Woods Conservation Nature Center
Blue Springs, MO



At least seventy-five citizens participated, as did Department staff from the Kansas City Region and the Jefferson City central office. Joe Bonneau of MDC's Fisheries Division moderated the meeting. Director John Hoskins made welcoming and closing remarks.

What MDC Heard . . . Kansas City Region

Twenty different people provided comments, with a few written comments provided at the close of the meeting. Most of the comments are reported in issue sections of this report, but the following items relate to the Kansas City Region, and have or will be pursued at the regional staff level:

- Volunteer & bird rehabilitator at Lakeside Nature Center offered thanks for the bluebird boxes and MDC's work to restore this species, but wanted MDC to help some other species:
 1. Consider adding kestrel boxes on roadsides to recover that declining population.
 2. Chimney swift towers should be built: those birds are less common today, and other things will benefit from artificial hollow trees, too. Texas builds information kiosks that are also nesting towers.
 3. Encourage more bat houses.
 4. These things can largely be provided with minimal budget: with MDC encouragement, scouts and other groups will build and erect.
- Landowner from Platte County made a plea for help controlling poaching on bluff land near the Missouri River, "rampant and continuous." His household members resist poachers but get a lot of harassment as result, e.g., fires, diesel in gas engines, entrails in drive, thump on windows at night, firewood thrown on roof, dogs bring home severed deer & turkey legs. He stated that he saw a man with a firearm watching his family through a scope as he looked through binoculars. Can they get some help?
- Citizen from Independence praised the wonderful renovation of Burr Oak Woods Nature Center. He brings his grandchildren to Burr Oak Woods and they really enjoy it.
- A Clay County retiree recounted a story involving his 17-yr old son, and some bad advice that led to a permit citation. He asked for help to keep his son upbeat about conservation. Director Hoskins asked him to discuss this issue with staff during the meeting break for suggestions on how we might help.
- Hunter education instructor said it appears that the Kansas City media has "painted a target on MDC's backside" in a recent TV "news" story and wants to clarify things. Even a felon who is prohibited from possessing firearms may be able to legally archery hunt, and would be required to buy a "firearms permit" to do so. In short, it is the media that was remiss in this story, not the Department.
- Shooting instructor reports that 142 Vernon County youths were involved in his 4H shooting sports program in this year, and several hundred more were involved in a four-county area around. The youths involved did well in statewide competition, but a limiting factor for this popular program is inadequate shooting facilities in west central Missouri. A trap field is all they've got now.
- Participant in a recent Lake Jacomo managed hunt was concerned about hunters who left their stands and did a "deer drive." That may be legal, but is not safe in those circumstances.

Continuation: What MDC Heard...Kansas City Region

Participant also saw people shooting from road and out the back of a pickup, both illegal. Better rules? More enforcement? Someone else in the audience responded by telling about a Smithville Lake managed deer hunt (58 hunters took 66 deer) where rules assign stands to all hunters, preventing the sort of problems reported.

- A man from Napoleon complained that a neighbor set up his deer stand about 50 feet from their property line, and would like to see a requirement that deer stands should not be put up within 200 yards of a property line without the consent of the adjoining landowner.

What MDC Said . . . Kansas City Region

- Director Hoskins heard the plea for help with poachers, concerned that MDC be responsive to an honest concern. However, he noted that the harassment described may have elements that go beyond what Conservation Agents are authorized to do. The Sheriff's Department or other local law enforcement have more authority in dealing with some issues. Agents can enforce game laws, but a problem involving harassment and intimidation should probably be addressed only with the help of other agencies. The participant met with Protection Division Chief Dennis Steward following the meeting.
- MDC has been short of agents, and that may surface in many places, e.g., Lake Taneycomo, Lake Jacomo, and elsewhere. The Department is addressing the shortage through a very dedicated staff that will soon be supplemented by a new class of agents, currently training. MDC depends on the public, not just to help shape decisions at forums like this, but also relies on citizens to report poaching incidents when witnessed.
- Managed hunts are important but not always simple to manage. Safety is paramount, and safety at the Lake Jacomo hunt will receive additional consideration in the future.

Ozark Regional Forum

December 9, 2004
Eminence HS Gymnasium
Eminence, MO



At least sixty-seven citizens participated, as did Department staff from the Ozark Region and the Jefferson City central office. Rep. J. C. Kuessner of District 152 was present at the forum. Larry Rieken of MDCs Wildlife Division moderated the meeting. Director John Hoskins made welcoming and closing remarks.

Mr. Rieken posed the following two questions and asked participants to help answer them:

- 1) What kinds of public use facilities are most important to provide and maintain on conservation areas?
- 2) Which resource issue do you feel is most important in the Ozark Region and what are your thoughts on how MDC is addressing the issue?

What MDC Heard . . . Ozark Region

Twenty-five people offered oral comments and seventeen forms with written comments were received. All comments are noted, mostly in issue sections of this report. The following items relate to the Ozark Region, and have or will be pursued at the regional staff level:

- Keep people from running deer with dogs. (written)
- Provide roads and trails, especially on Angeline CA and on Indian Pond Road between D Highway and Alley Hollow. (written)
- Deer season is important, but you can only hunt where you can get to. Roads like the one off D highway thru Indian Pond to Alley Springs are important to hunters. The county commission graded that road 3 years ago, but it needs it again. Can MDC help?
- A Shannon County convenience store owner who operates a check station appreciates the help of staff like Brad Hadley and Scott Stevens, but has concerns. It is tough to keep up with all the regulations that checkers need to know, and he'd be interested in some sort of training session where he and his workers could learn what's right for help.
- How accurate are MDC's boundary surveys? Participants with a shared boundary wonder if MDC will help pay costs to survey to determine its right location.
- Roads at Peck Ranch are a problem because ATVs are prohibited on them, including on gravel surfaces.
- Lots of roads at Peck Ranch CA have been closed. Participant wants more opportunities to drive to remote places (e.g. cemeteries), and during the evening hours when wildlife is active.
- Participant was raised back in the Ozark hills, and is concerned how many old roads are being closed or considered for closing. Families want to go to places their ancestors were buried or lived, and closed roads keep them from getting there.
- Shannon County is one of the most beautiful location in the country, and lots visit to enjoy the scenery. Unfortunately, many spots of the roads where there were once beautiful scenic overlooks are getting blocked by trees and undergrowth. MDC would do well to work with others to open up those vistas.

The Ozark Regional Coordination Team posed the following question:

- *Which resource issue do you feel is most important in the Ozark Region?*

The following list summarizes written responses handed in. Where a comment was offered to the second part of the question (What are your thoughts on how MDC is addressing this issue?), it is included in the appropriate report section:

- Timber
- Trees
- Fishing
- Control of timber cutting
- Springs & rivers
- Water and river resources
- Too much land being bought
- Ensure that all public lands remain open to all equestrian use
- Ensure that public lands become open and available to equestrian use
- Timber 2. Wildlife & rare plants 3. enforcement of existing rules & regulations
- Forestry

What MDC Said . . . Ozark Region

- MDC is buying little land today, and will likely not buy much more in Shannon County because we already own a lot. There may be some exceptions for very special areas, filling in-holdings or land swaps. However, large tracts are most likely to be bought elsewhere, in the many counties and land-types where little conservation land now lies.
- On newer acquisitions MDC has good surveys, but many older tracts have not been surveyed. Today we routinely survey when acquiring land, and we have our own surveyors, although fewer than needed (and we plan to hire more soon). Talk to the area manager to learn about past surveys of the site. The bottom line for the Department is that we want to know where the boundaries are, and be good neighbors to those who adjoin our lands.
- ATV rules at Peck Ranch have a long history. People complained about unsafe conditions when there was heavy ATV use of the roads. Signing prohibiting ATVs now begins at the Carter County line. The fundamental issue is public access to public land, and MDC tries to strike balance among conflicting goals, including safety and recreation.
- Peck Ranch started out as an inviolate refuge, and much research has been done here and continues. Some research can be compromised by roads, public use, and heavy wildlife disturbance. Too much public use could damage the area's legacy, but efforts have been made to make the area more open. Before the late 1970s, gates were locked at night. Roads are expensive to maintain, and serious erosion could be the result of leaving roads open that we cannot afford to maintain. There are plans, however, to rebuild some roads at Peck Ranch .

Northwest Regional Forum

December 14, 2004
Country Kitchen
Maryville, MO



At least seventy-six citizens participated, as did Department staff from the Northwest Region and the Jefferson City central office. Mitch Miller of MDC's Wildlife Division moderated the meeting. Director John Hoskins made welcoming and closing remarks. Representative Brad Lager of Maryville was in attendance.

Rep. Lager welcomed and thanked people for coming, and expressed appreciation for the Department's interest in Northwest Missouri. He then started the discussion with a question on many minds: is the deer harvest situation getting better in this part of the state?

The following two questions were also posed to participants:

- 1) What kinds of public use facilities are most important to provide and maintain on conservation areas?
- 2) What is your opinion of MDC's deer management strategies such as the 4-point antler restriction, increased emphasis on an antler harvest and overall deer population trends in northwest Missouri?

What MDC Heard . . . Northwest Region

Thirty-eight oral comments were offered and thirty-nine forms with written comments were received. All comments are noted, mostly in issue sections of this report. The following items relate to the Northwest Region, and have or will be pursued at the regional staff level:

- Keep putting fish in Big Lake - how about crappie? (written)
- MDC should make equipment available to help landowners plant & grow habitat. (written)
- Limit the number of bird hunters on MDC land in northwest Missouri. (written)
- Become more proactive in northwest Missouri at introducing shooting and archery into schools. (written)
- Participant would like information on volunteer/internship opportunities in northwest Missouri. (written)
- Northwest Missouri wants representation on the Conservation Commission.
- Are there more coyotes today?
- Has Missouri considered stocking pheasants like other states do? Quail are too delicate to stock, but it would work for pheasants.
- Eliminate all cool season grasses from department areas. (written)

What MDC Said . . . Northwest Region

- There are more coyotes today than in the past. Wolves may once have held coyote population in check, and for a long time high fur prices provided incentive to trap them. Low prices today make controlling them more difficult.

Continuation: What MDC Said...Northwest Region
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- MDC has no plans to develop a “put & take” variety of pheasant hunting. We have had some success starting reproducing resident populations, and expect to keep encouraging it.
- MDC has stocked bluegill and catfish at Big Lake, but anticipates that the prolific crappie will come back on their own, now that several lake problems have been addressed. If not, we will look into stocking.
- To our knowledge, Nebraska once moved flatheads out of the Missouri River to inland sites years ago, but are not doing so now. We believe there are several reasons not to take fish out of the Missouri River for stocking elsewhere: No one wants exotic species like zebra mussels spreading farther inland. If Nebraska boats are seen taking fish out of the river, it does not necessarily mean they are being transported elsewhere for stocking.
- Northwest Region gets a number of folks coming in inquiring about summer work. There are several hired each summer, providing great opportunities for interns to learn and decide if they want to pursue a career in Conservation. We often get acquainted with work habits and skills that lead to easy hiring choices when they graduate.

Next Steps

The Missouri Department of Conservation places a high value on public input. We have found the Conservation Forums to be an excellent tool for gathering input, and for developing better relations with supporters, critics and others who are interested in Missouri's resources. We plan to schedule another round of Conservation Forums in 2005.

In addition to these forums, we gather information in a variety of ways, including public opinion surveys, public use questionnaires, daily phone and mail input to field staff and offices, listening to legislators' concerns, and attending or sponsoring other public meetings.

If at any time you have an issue or concern, please contact any of our staff or offices.

TO ALL WHO PARTICIPATED,
THANK YOU
FOR YOUR TIME, IDEAS AND CANDOR!